United Nations A/57/PV.5

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

5th plenary meeting
Friday, 13 September 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chávez Frías (*spoke in Spanish*): The heroic people of Venezuela and its revolutionary Government greet all peoples and all Governments of the world represented in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

I must begin by underlining the intense activity that Venezuela has undertaken within the framework of the agenda of the United Nations this year of 2002. For that reason, we made the effort to come here to this most timely session of the General Assembly.

Venezuela began the year by assuming in January the presidency of the Group of 77 and China. We coordinated and managed that very important group of countries of the world, primarily the countries of the third world. First, we coordinated the preparations, documents, agreements and dialogues leading up to the Monterrey Summit, where we attended, speaking on behalf of the countries of the South and especially on behalf of the countries of the Group of 77 and China. Venezuela then continued that effort by coordinating our Group in preparation for the important Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, held a few days ago. The discussions at the Johannesburg Summit are still fresh in our minds.

This year, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela also held the presidency of the Group of 15, another important group of developing countries fighting for greater scope in the political, economic and social domains.

Finally, Venezuela has had a very intense agenda at the United Nations during this year of 2002, and in the remaining months we wish to finish the year with an even greater intensity, making proposals, coordinating actions and seeking decisions to complete and contribute our modest effort in the search for the solutions, goals and objectives set out in this Hall during the historic Millennium Summit of 2000.

Thus we come once again to this Hall to ensure that the world hears the voice of millions of men, women and children who fight daily for their life and dignity by striving towards justice in the homeland of Simón Bolívar.

To begin, I would say that this session of the General Assembly is meeting amidst the suffering and

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02-58842 (E)

mourning afflicting the people of the United States, the people and city of New York and all peoples of the world, on this first anniversary of the heinous acts of 11 September. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, from the soul of its heroic people and from the heart of its revolutionary and democratic Government, prays to God our Lord for the eternal peace of the victims of those horrible events. It also reiterates its sentiments of solidarity and condolences to their families. It affirms its condemnation of those who planned and carried out those terrorist actions. We also offer our efforts in the fight against the scourge of terrorism in the world in its most diverse facets and manifestations. However, at the same time, Venezuela stresses the necessity of recognizing the complexity of the alarming situation in the world today. The direct condemnation of terrorism must necessarily be accompanied — for ethical and moral reasons — by an equally forceful condemnation of the causes and processes that have transformed the world into an infinite sum of marginalized individuals and a reign of injustice, inequality and poverty. It is written in the Bible, which contains God's words, that the only path to peace is justice.

The resolute repudiation of terrorism must also be accompanied by an unreserved political resolve on the part of the leaders of the world to acknowledge, for example, that today's international economic system fuels a process in which the perverse doctrine of unbridled neoliberalism leads to greater poverty, inequality and despair among the poor peoples of our earth.

For example, 17 people die of hunger every minute in the world. If we were to fulfil all the commitments undertaken to combat poverty, it would take us 130 years to eradicate it from the planet, according to figures cited in the most recent report of the United Nations Development Programme.

The condemnation of terrorism must go hand in hand with a decision-making process that will make it possible to make greater headway in the war — the war, I stress — against poverty. For that reason, Venezuela has consistently advocated — first at Monterrey and then, more recently, at Johannesburg — that an international humanitarian fund should be created whose resources might come, for example, from a percentage of global military expenditure. It could be funded by a percentage of the immense resources, those billions and billions of dollars, that we, the developing countries, the poor countries, annually transfer to the developed world through the perverse mechanism of external debt — or eternal debt, I should say.

I am sure that the countries of Africa and Asia can tell the same story as we in Latin America do. In the last 20 years of the twentieth century, Latin America paid off more than twice the amount of its external debt. But now it turns out that we owe more than when we began this whole perverse process.

It seems only fair to me that, given the situation that faces the world and the bleak path that we are following, this issue must be debated. Why not transfer a portion of this "eternal debt" to an international humanitarian fund — a fund that could also be financed by monies confiscated from drug traffickers, who do so much harm in the world, and from corrupt individuals who have walked off with billions of dollars from poor countries.

Venezuela has a list that it will provide to the police forces of the world. It will assist them in getting back billions of dollars and in transferring them to an international fund. Such a fund could also be financed through a tax that could be levied, quite justly, on major speculative capital transactions. There could be other possible sources as well; of course, this would require a very high-level political decision at the global level.

Today, faced with the world's tragedy, Venezuela insists on this idea, and we ask the United Nations to engage in a debate on this issue. In Johannesburg, for example, I recall that we began very interesting discussions in a number of round table meetings in which Venezuela participated. We discussed this topic, and I was very gratified to see a consensus emerge among the heads of State and Government present there. I was very pleased with the support expressed for that idea by the President of brotherly Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who, during the Johannesburg round tables, commented on the need to create instruments such as this, given that today's international financial agencies are not adequately equipped to combat poverty — a scourge that besets all of humankind.

President Cardoso referred to the Marshall Plan, which was put into effect to assist Europe in the post-war period. I think that today we would need hundreds of Marshall Plans around the world to save the countries of the third word from hell and from death.

But just as we condemn global terrorism and its causes, I have come to the Assembly also on behalf of the valiant people of the Bolivarian Republic to denounce out loud other kinds of terrorism and other kinds of causes. In Venezuela, we have seen the beginning of a process of planned, systematic terrorism, which erupted in violence and blood also on the eleventh — 11 April, not 11 September — this year, that is five months ago. On that day, a fascist putsch overthrew the legitimate Government that I am privileged to head, and installed, for an extremely brief period, a dictatorship that filled with fear the streets, cities and villages of our beloved Venezuela.

What were the causes of that bloody terrorist *coup d'état*, which resulted in the loss of dozens of human lives and wounded hundreds of people, who are still recovering from their very serious injuries? Quite simply, what we had was a democratic Government — a legitimate Government elected by the people; a Government that has committed itself to revolutionary democracy and to political, economic and social change; a Government that has very resolutely and very seriously undertaken to put into effect the principles of the United Nations; a Government that has undertaken the task of carrying out social actions that will transform society in order to bring justice and equality to our people; a Government that has doubled the budget for education in less than three years; a Government that has doubled the health-care budget; a Government that has reduced by 10 per cent infant malnutrition; a Government that has increased by 10 per cent its people's access to drinking water; a Government that has reduced infant mortality from 21 per 1,000 to 17 per 1,000; a Government that has increased by 30 per cent children and adolescents' access to free and compulsory public education. This is a Government that has had to deal with the wild neoliberal privatization of health and education, a Government that began by reducing poverty and marginalization in a country that is full of wealth but has been governed by senseless elitists who were completely insensitive to people's needs. A Government such as this was overthrown by a fascist alliance among privileged sectors, factions instigating a *coup d'état* using media terror.

There is an issue in today's world that needs to be discussed in the world but few dare to do so; I would like to be bold enough to discuss it. This issue is the use of mass media in the world. Venezuela is a good case to be studied. Mass media, exploiting the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press, supported the putsch and manipulated society. The most appalling thing was that, when the people reacted against the dictatorship, the popular reaction was silenced and broadcasting was stopped and nobody knew what was happening in Venezuela. I think this is a special case of ethics in media communications that deserves to be studied.

A little while ago, a great intellectual and Latin American writer, the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano, author of *Open Veins of Latin America* spoke of the question of mass media around the world and said this great truth: "Never have so few deceived so many." We need to tackle this with courage as we face the beginning of this century. The elitist perpetrators of the putsch used the mass media and think they can continue to use them. They used police terrorism and military terrorism and achieved a very powerful alliance that was successful in overthrowing the Government and succeeded in taking me prisoner and keeping me incommunicado for many hours on a Caribbean island. This fascist coup eliminated the Congress, overthrew all laws and all public branches of authority and did away with the judicial branch. It seized mayors and members of Parliament elected by the population. However, in spite of all of this, they could not oppress us. Within a few hours, something happened in Venezuela that has scarcely ever happened in any country or nation. People began to rush out into the streets, without weapons, with only the weapons of their courage and their hearts and with the Bolivarian Constitution in their hands. Millions of men and women and young people went out into the streets, clamouring for respect for their dignity and — miracle of miracles — in less than forty-eight hours, the Government along with patriotic soldiers overthrew the dictatorship, restored the Constitution, rescued the President who had been abducted and restored democracy to Venezuela. This was a miracle. Only a people that is united can achieve this. Only a people that is conscious and active can sweep away such fascist and terrorist assaults. This was the first time that this was ever seen in any nation for a very long time.

Mine is a people that has regained its libertarian essence and its liberating essence. A people that, since the time of Simón Bolívar hardly two hundred years ago, has worked together with Colombia, Ecuador,

Peru, Bolivia, Panama to achieve the independence of half of the continent of the Americas. This is the Venezuelan people for whom I, once again, reaffirm my undying love and devotion for their courage and dignity.

And here, from this rostrum, on behalf of this people, I offer my sincere and warm thanks for all the gestures of solidarity that we received from here, from the United Nations, from the Organization of American States, from Governments and above all, from many countries of the Americas. Messages came also from Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania, because this was a unique situation at the beginning of this century. This constitution is a revolutionary peaceloving and democratic document. It was drafted by the people itself and is now being defended and promoted by the people.

In conclusion, following these events we in Venezuela are aware, we know — I realize that many people do not yet know — we have experienced terrorism first hand.

A few days ago a video came out, more proof of what was being planned in Venezuela. In that video an international journalist made some revelations, stating that he was called in the morning on the day of the coup and that, long before the first person fell dead as a result of shooting by a number of snipers — there were some foreigners among them — the coup perpetrators were already recording a message in which they said that President Chávez had ordered people to be killed and that there had been six deaths. Well before the firing and the massacre of defenceless people began, they had already recorded this message.

Ultimately, fortunately, the military and civilian reaction was very rapid, because the terror that had been planned against the Venezuelan people on a massive scale would have meant that terrorist practices would be applied against anything that was popular or democratic in Venezuela. They expected to repeal the Constitution. But, of course, it was restored within forty-eight hours because of the peaceful democratic revolution brought about by the people.

We are grateful for the international community's unequivocal condemnation of the *coup d'état* — the nightmare — that we experienced for some days in Venezuela. And we reaffirm that our Government, in which Venezuelans have placed their confidence in a number of successive democratic processes, will not engage in a witch hunt, or carrying out summary trials or executions. As the people say — there is a song they sing in the streets: "He's back, he's back, he's back." With strict adherence to our humanitarian and Bolivarian tradition and upholding our national Constitution, we came back with our Constitution in our hands on the popular tide that swept the legitimate Government back, along with the Constitution, and put an end to the terrorists, the *coup d'état* and its perpetrators. For the first time in Venezuela's history, victory in a political conflict — and bear in mind that this was the overthrow of a dictatorship — meant that the Government that returned respected those who had been defeated.

We have now engaged in a major national dialogue, a national debate. In this we have also requested the help of the United Nations through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and asked for support from representatives of the Organization of American States. We have also requested support from the Carter Center headed by former President Jimmy Carter.

We are grateful for their support and we reaffirm that Venezuela will continue to be guided by God and by the hand of its people, with the Bolivarian Constitution in its grasp. In doing so we will be joining the world to contribute to seek out alternatives to the economic models that have unleashed hunger and misery upon the world. We will continue to make our modest contribution, backed by the efforts of millions. We will continue to make a supreme effort to change the world and to make it viable so that, as soon as possible in the twenty-first century, justice will be achieved. For, as the word of God has asserted for thousands of years, justice is absolutely the only path to genuine peace.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Maher El Sayed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Maher El Sayed (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by extending our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, both personally and as a representative of the Czech Republic, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. I am confident that, at this important juncture of developing collective global action, you will steer the work of this session with your recognized ability and wisdom, stemming from your country's long experience in confronting aggression and the horrors it brings.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, our friend Han Seung-soo, and to his country, the Republic of Korea, whose positive and effective role led to results that we aspire to consolidate.

I cannot fail to express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who for the past six years has contributed his experience, wisdom and perseverance to reasserting the standing of the Organization and the effectiveness of its role, and to strengthening the principles upon which the Charter was founded. He did all of that despite the inherent obstacles that were placed before him, either deliberately or unwittingly, by those ignorant of the key role of the United Nations in providing victors and vanquished alike an opportunity to benefit from the developments of the age and to achieve the hopes and aspiration of their peoples to a world that is safer and more just for all. I wish to pay further tribute to the Secretary-General for the very courageous statement he made yesterday before the Assembly, a statement in which he set out his very clear vision in addressing and resolving the world's problems.

On behalf of Egypt, I would also like to welcome Switzerland as the most recent member of the United Nations family. We look forward to its active participation in the work of the Organization, along with that of Timor-Leste, which will soon accede to membership.

The current session has been convened one year after the horrific tragedy that befell the United Sates on 11 September 2001. We reiterate our condolences to the United States. We also emphasize the sense of loss we share with the families of the victims, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery. We hope that this strong nation will overcome its ordeal and look towards a future of cooperation with the rest of the world, a future forged by all of us for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the planet, regardless of their race or religion, without discrimination, intolerance or bias. Egypt has stood by the United States throughout this difficult ordeal, whose target was not only a friendly country but also the values and principles to which we all adhere and which relate to respect for humankind and its right to life and to choosing to build rather than to destroy as the basis for joint action. In that regard, I would like to briefly make the following points.

First, notwithstanding the gravity of the tragic events that took place on that sad day, the world neither began nor ended on 11 September. Many peoples have known terrorism before. They have suffered from it and have resisted it — sometimes alone — in the face of hardship and even unjustified criticism. What is new is that the heinous crime of 11 September has generated an unprecedented wave of constructive international solidarity. It has confirmed what we have been stating all along: that terrorism is a global phenomenon and that it is not associated with any particular country, continent, race or religion. It is an expression of a propensity for evil that remains dormant until the opportunity presents itself, either from within or due to prevailing circumstances, for it to awaken and wreak havoc. Thus, it is important to repeat the call that President Mubarak has been making for a number of years: for the convening of an international conference in which participating nations would shoulder their responsibility to confront terrorism. That would lend authority to the overwhelming wave of solidarity extended to the United States in its hour of grief and agony.

Secondly, the fight against terrorism should not be the lens through which the world views every issue and every problem. Terrorism is one of the evil phenomena of the world, but it should not cause us to forget the evils of poverty, disease, occupation, the denial of individual and national rights or the humiliation of human beings and the destruction of their livelihood by means of bombs or any other

similarly harmful means. Terrorism has roots and causes, but not justifications. I believe that, in most cases, a viable remedy for terrorism can be found only if we drain the tributaries of hopelessness, anger and frustration that feed the river of evil; otherwise their confluence can become explosive.

Thirdly, it is both necessary and fair that we not confuse those who are unjust with those who are unjustly treated. The international community should not confuse terrorism — which we reject, condemn and fight — with the legitimate right of self-defence in conformity with norms compatible with our values: the right to defend oneself against aggression, occupation, the usurpation of rights or attempts to erase cultural identity. That right was exercised by the resistance that liberated the United States more than two centuries ago and by that which liberated Europe from the Nazi tyranny that initiated the Holocaust but ended by perishing in its fire. Humanity and right were thus victorious.

I would like here to reiterate what everybody knows: no religion — Islam, Christianity, Judaism or Buddhism — preaches terrorism. Those are all religions that proclaim lofty values and ideals. It is inappropriate to blame them for the sins of a few of their followers who have gone astray. Our fight against terrorism should proceed from our collective solidarity in cherishing life, and not from hatred, which is neither a solution nor a refuge.

The world is at an extremely delicate juncture in its history. We are at a crossroads in international relations. The enhancement of the Organization's capacity to respond to the hopes and aspirations that arose after the end of the cold war and its divisions coincided with a trend towards neglecting that very capacity, a deepening of new divisions and a resort to unilateral decisions. Such a trend can lead only to deadlock and prevent us from addressing issues that may determine the fate of humanity and its ability to reconcile itself with nature and with advanced technology and to take the opportunities that they provide for the achievement of a better life free from poverty, want, disease, oppression and fear — a life in which justice and solidarity prevail.

We must therefore break this deadlock, which is of benefit to no party or cause, by renewing our commitment to the Charter and reaffirming our determination to work together to strengthen the United Nations, enhance its effectiveness, promote its principles and champion its purposes in confronting both the old and the new dangers that face our world. One of these dangers is the persistence of hotbeds of conflict and violence in the world, including the conflict from which we in the Middle East are suffering.

I would like to read out the statement made yesterday by the President of Egypt, Mr. Hosni Mubarak. He said:

> "I listened attentively to the statement made by President Bush to the General Assembly, and I would like to welcome the positive elements in that statement. First, I welcome the affirmation by the President of the United States that the United States is committed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, side by side with Israel, and that all the parties must assume their responsibilities in order to achieve that goal. We hope that the peace process will receive a strong impetus through effective participation by the United States, leading to a return of stability to the area and to a just and comprehensive peace as early as possible.
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> "Secondly, with regard to Iraq, I welcome the fact that the United States has opened the door to the pivotal role that must be played by the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, on the question of Iraq. Such a course of action will break the deadlock and prevent any negative effects resulting from the escalation of the situation, thus maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.
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> "In view of this, I am calling on the Iraqi leadership to make use of this opportunity to implement all the relevant Security Council resolutions and accept the return of the inspectors immediately so that we can prevent an escalation of the situation and the dangerous consequences that would have a very negative impact on the security and safety of the brotherly Iraqi people and of the Middle East as a whole."

The Palestinian people continue to suffer under an oppressive occupation that rejects the judgement of history, embodied by the Charter, that the age of colonialism has long gone. It is an occupation that clings to policies reminiscent of those of the era of darkness and chaos and may even bring us back to that

era. The Arabs have extended their hand to Israel with a unanimously adopted initiative that reflects their genuine belief in a peace that guarantees — without exceptions or double standards — the rights of all. If Israel genuinely desires peace, it must abandon its greed and illusions, put a stop to its practices and aggressive acts against the Palestinian people and their legitimate leadership and agree to withdraw from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. An independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, can then be established and can join all the Arab States that have demonstrated their readiness to establish normal relations with Israel and live with it in peace and security.

Justice, right, mutual respect and the restoration to people of their rights were the building blocks on which peace between Egypt and Israel was established, securing safe borders and normal relations during the past 25 years. The other model, however, which Israel has espoused with respect to our brethren in Palestine, has achieved neither peace nor security; rather, it has resulted in victims on both sides, who fall each day, paying the price for an attempt to obstruct the natural course of events.

The international community must assume its responsibility in this regard — without prejudice, striving only for what is right; unswerving, moving only towards justice; and without ambition, except for a peace that will allow the peoples of the region to forge a better future. It must reaffirm the necessity of abiding by the Charter, United Nations resolutions and the agreements that have been signed, and must reject any attempt to abandon them.

The debate on security and stability in the Middle East relates also to the situation in Iraq — a situation that must be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Charter and relevant resolutions, which all parties must respect, steering away from a course of military action. Egypt reaffirms its rejection of military strikes against Iraq, whose unity and territorial integrity must be respected and which, for its part, must respect the legitimate international will.

We must do everything in our power to put an end to the extreme suffering of the people of Iraq. We must end the embargo, which has inflicted great harm upon Iraq, negatively affecting and the livelihood of its citizens and damaging future generations.

Any discussion of the United Nations, its achievements and its future would be incomplete without recalling the tangible contributions of the Organization to focusing attention on the major issues of our times and forging an international consensus on some of them. This contribution has been realized through a series of conferences convened during the last decade of the twentieth century and the first years of this century on the environment, human rights, population, social development, women, financing for development and sustainable development. It has been achieved also through the recommendations of the Millennium Summit of the General Assembly, which attempted to shape a conceptual framework for the Organization's work, based on peace and security for nations and individuals, economic and social development in its comprehensive sense, equality among States and respect for the cultural diversity of nations and societies.

In this regard, I would like to reaffirm the importance of the faithful implementation, in both letter and spirit, of the outcomes of those conferences. It is also important that no attempt is made to evade or circumvent those mutual obligations. Ultimately, the judgement of history will be based not on the intentions or objectives contained in political declarations and final documents, but rather on the extent of our success in implementing them, their implementation.

Any just consideration of the international economic situation must conclude that it is unacceptable to continue the present disparities in the distribution of wealth among the peoples of the Earth, the lack of democracy in international economic decision-making and the persistence of arbitrary trade practices and monetary policies against the interests of developing countries, which have often led to successive financial crises and resulted in the economic collapse of many developing countries and the destruction, in a matter of days, of the development gains made over decades of arduous national effort.

Our African continent and its issues occupy a special place in the international community's efforts aimed at achieving economic and social development and maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the collective responsibilities we all assume under the Charter. These efforts proceed from a firm conviction that the United Nations, the Security Council in particular, has primary responsibility for the

maintenance of peace and security in that continent. They also proceed from our conviction that we, as African States, are indispensable partners that bear a special responsibility to resolve the conflicts that fragment our continent and to formulate the programmes that would extricate our peoples from the anguish of poverty to join the course of progress and prosperity.

Our continent has demonstrated its seriousness by launching the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was endorsed by African heads of State at the Lusaka Summit of the Organization of African Unity in 2001, and the African Union, which was inaugurated at the Summit held in Durban in July 2002. If by embracing these two initiatives African States have adopted an approach to building their future on the basis of the highest ideals reflecting the noblest human thinking, then the international community for its part should support that approach in order to provide a better life for Africa's peoples, open markets for its products, inject foreign investment into its economies and assist it to solve its problems.

The persistence of volatile conflicts and the danger of the possession by States, organizations or individuals of weapons of mass destruction make it incumbent upon us to be more diligent on disarmament issues. At the regional level, Egypt has repeatedly called for serious engagement to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, first and foremost nuclear weapons, and to place all nuclear facilities in the region, without exception, under international supervision.

Peace and security cannot be established in the Middle East while a grave disparity persists in the rights and obligations of the States of the region, which upsets its balance of power. Regional stability will be achieved only when Israel accedes to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), because it is the only State in the region that has not yet done so. Such stability will also be attained through progress towards the implementation of President Mubarak's initiative to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

In addition, the world confronts other ills that represent both a challenge and an opportunity for us to demonstrate our ability to work together for the good of all. Efforts to combat endemic diseases have fallen short. Countries around the world suffer from the spread of HIV/AIDS, which threatens their stability, owing to their lack of capacity and resources they are unable to contain the pandemic, thus necessitating assistance for those countries in dealing with the crisis.

The world also confronts numerous environmental challenges such as those related to biodiversity, climate change, drought and desertification, all of which require the redoubling of international efforts to address them in order to safeguard the right of future generations to a secure life. Scarcity of water threatens the eruption of conflicts in several regions of the world. The international community must therefore maximize the benefit from, and the proper management of, available water resources while respecting and protecting the acquired rights of States and the international agreements that govern the rights to utilize those resources.

The sheer size, complexity and scope of all these problems may lead some to yield to pessimism and frustration, but we are confident that the forces of good in the world, armed with the noble principles of the Charter — to which we come here every year to reiterate our commitment — will remain resolute in their determination to fashion a better tomorrow. We are confident that humankind will overcome the propensity for evil so that together we can forge ahead towards frontiers made possible by unprecedented technological progress at the outset of the twenty-first century, progress which God has commanded us to dedicate to our collective well-being so that the world can live in peace, security, prosperity and harmony. This will allow the young to flourish, potential to emerge, hope to overcome fear and pain, light to prevail over darkness and humankind to triumph over all that hinders its happiness, freedom and advancement.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. S. Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): My warmest congratulations go to you, Sir, on your early election as President of the General Assembly, which was the first fruit of the revitalization efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo. We congratulate both of you on successfully implementing these new procedures.

After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the world joined the United States in expressing grief and outrage. Citizens from nearly one half of the United Nations Member States perished. A swift, determined United Nations response set the stage for a united global effort to weed out terrorism. Never in recent history have so many States acted in such unison as members of one international community as they did in the months following 11 September.

That was not inevitable. The international community could easily have fractured after 11 September. Hence, it is useful to reflect on the forces that brought us together and on what key lessons we have learned.

After 11 September 2001, the international community rallied together because we all realized that the challenges posed by those events affected the common interests of all States. The common menace of terrorism elicited a cohesive psychological response. Everyone is vulnerable. In Singapore, we discovered terrorists belonging to a regional network with links to Al Qaeda, whose tentacles spread to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and even Australia. Its targets were United States, Israeli, British and other foreign interests.

But a cohesive response also requires a galvanizing force. The United Nations provided that. The United Nations also legitimizes international action. On 12 September 2001, the Security Council adopted, by consensus, its resolution 1368 (2001), condemning the terrorist attacks and expressing its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the attacks. It was followed shortly by a consensus resolution of the General Assembly, resolution 56/1. Within three weeks of the attack, the Security Council negotiated and adopted, again by consensus, its resolution 1373 (2001), a landmark resolution which dealt comprehensively with counter-terrorism and provided a common legal basis for all States to take action against terrorists and their supporters.

The Security Council's response to 11 September was impressive and was possible only because all the major Powers agreed on the need to respond decisively to the terrorist threat. Indeed, the war on terrorism has reordered international priorities and has created new opportunities for partnership, casting a new strategic overlay over great-Power relationships.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Many of us have long had unhappy experiences with it. But 11 September focused us on its globalized nature and stressed the need for coherence and coordination in international cooperation. After 11 September, a number of international, regional, subregional and national plans of action and strategies to combat terrorism emerged. Some of these proposals took the form of specific and practical counter-terrorism measures. Others assumed a more normative character. These efforts are the building blocks for coordinated international action against terrorism.

This commitment to collaborative international action, however, has only recently begun to take shape. Since 11 September, various organs of the United Nations system have examined their respective responsibilities and available tools so as to undertake this collaborative mission in the most effective manner. The report prepared by the Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism is a clear example. Coordination and coherence within the United Nations system should certainly be enhanced. The common enemy we face has built up a sophisticated and complex global network that requires an appropriate response.

But as we consider new international mechanisms to fight terrorism, we should pause to reflect on a key question: how can we ensure effective coordination between the United Nations, other regional and international organizations and Member States? How can we synergize respective international, regional and national competencies to maximize operational effectiveness against terrorism? The United Nations comparative advantage and aptitude reside in its consultative, coordinating and facilitative functions.

Ultimately, however, the contributions made by the United Nations must depend on the political will and resolve of its Member States to make its laws and norms work. Achieving the right equilibrium of responsibilities and obligations is crucial if we are to succeed in our common mission to defeat international terrorism.

The battle against terrorism has also to be fought at the philosophical level. Some terrorists have tried to depict the current global anti-terrorism campaign as a war against Islam. This is obviously not true. No religion tolerates terrorism, and Islam certainly does not, but we should not ignore the extent to which the

appeal of extremists such as Osama bin Laden resonates with the marginalized and disenfranchised, feeding upon stereotypes and prejudices. At a time of confusion and uncertainty, the value of cross-cultural understanding and communication cannot be underestimated.

As an international Organization with near universal membership, the United Nations can play a key role in promoting tolerance and understanding between nations, cultures and religions. The United Nations dialogue among civilizations is a key initiative that we should build upon. The dialogue among civilizations celebrates diversity and introduces a new paradigm of international relations, promoting a dialogue among the major world religions and cultures. Dialogue between the different cultures and religions would help to reduce the sources of prejudice and intolerance that currently colour individual and societal perceptions.

Another longer-term challenge is to address the economic and social conditions that encourage terrorists. International economic integration is ultimately the only guarantor of prosperity, but the fact is that globalization is both incomplete in scope and uneven in its distribution of costs and benefits. Many developing countries remain imperfectly integrated into the world economy. These problems must be addressed by capacity-building and infrastructure development within developing countries, with whatever international assistance is necessary, and by the elimination of trade barriers and protectionism in the developed countries.

The events of 11 September underscored that, in an interdependent world, no one is invulnerable. Local problems can easily be transformed into global problems. Each day that we do not act to address and contain these problems increases their potential to do more harm. Our collective security is dependent on our ability and willingness to confront new challenges. We should not await another catastrophe on the scale of 11 September before we are forced to act on other equally challenging global problems that confront us. The war against terrorism has to be waged with both guns and butter.

I would like to conclude by sharing our experiences on the Security Council. Almost two years ago, members of the General Assembly gave Singapore the honour and privilege of serving as one of the elected members of the Security Council. Our term ends this December. I want to thank all those who showed their trust in us by giving us this unique opportunity.

Our experience has been a fulfilling and enriching one from which we have drawn important lessons and insights. The Security Council has gone through many phases. Designed first of all to deal with inter-State conflicts, the Security Council has increasingly moved towards handling intra-State conflicts in the post-cold-war era. But the terrorist attacks of 11 September were an unprecedented development. They produced a new era, confronting the Security Council with a new and distinct threat to international peace and security. Singapore has therefore served in two very different Security Councils — one before 11 September and another after those tragic events.

For the Security Council to remain effective, it has to demonstrate that it can respond effectively to new challenges. Otherwise, its relevance and credibility will be compromised. As a small State, we are vulnerable to such terror attacks. As a member of the Security Council, we have supported initiatives which address this new threat.

A key lesson that we have learnt is that, for all its imperfections and occasional failings, the Security Council often does work. It is nevertheless too early to gauge the success and effectiveness of the Security Council in responding to the scourge of terrorism. Whether the Security Council can continue to develop appropriate responses over the long run at this plastic phase of the creation of a new strategic era will be a critical test of its relevance in the new century.

It is naive to expect that the swift unity of global action post 11 September will henceforth be demonstrated on all global issues. Our experiences in the Security Council attest to protracted processes being the norm rather than the exception for coalescing international action. But where international consensus has not yet consolidated over situations posing serious and immediate threats, the lack of international consensus in itself cannot be an excuse for inaction. That would be an abdication of individual and collective responsibility.

Finally, as one of two Asian elected members of the Council, we were pleased to make a small contribution to the East Timor success story. This

success was made possible only by the hard work and sacrifices of its people, with the support of the international community. Today, the United Nations continues to play a critical role in preserving the peace in East Timor and in ensuring that the Government and people of East Timor have the opportunity to succeed in their quest to build a democratic, stable and viable State. We look forward to welcoming East Timor as the 191st Member of the United Nations.

Let me conclude by warmly congratulating Switzerland for becoming the 190th Member of the United Nations. Switzerland may be a new member; however, it has also provided the second most important venue for United Nations activities. It has therefore long been a partner of the United Nations and, I believe, this partnership will be deepened with its membership.

The President. I now give the floor to His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to open my statement by extending warm congratulations to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, the Czech Republic, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. We wish you success at the helm of this Assembly, which is convened against a backdrop of complex circumstances and daunting global challenges. Let me assure you of my delegation's full commitment to cooperating with you in order to facilitate the fulfilment of your mandate.

I wish to extend a word of thanks and tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his prudent and efficient stewardship of the previous session. In the same vein, I wish to reiterate our appreciation for the outstanding performance of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and for his tireless and concrete efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the world Organization in serving global peace, security and development.

Kuwait welcomes the admission of the Swiss Confederation to the membership of our Organization. We are confident that Switzerland's membership will enhance the benefits of its already active role in supporting various United Nations programmes and activities and will further consolidate the principles and purposes of the Charter, particularly as that country is host to many United Nations bodies and specialized agencies.

The events of 11 September 2001 in the United States, together with their consequences and implications, have changed the global landscape and have created a multitude of new challenges for the entire world, as we are now collectively entrenched in our fight against terrorism, violence and extremism. Experience has shown that combating this pernicious phenomenon is a universal responsibility and that no individual country alone, irrespective of its resources or determination, can eliminate it.

Moral and practical reasons make it unacceptable to link that curse to any particular nation, religion or culture. Such an attempt does not serve any of our common goals. To the contrary, it will deepen political and cultural divides, exacerbate the crisis and transform it into a conflict among civilizations that harms us all and from which we have nothing to gain. Therefore, the United Nations remains the most appropriate and effective mechanism for studying and analysing that phenomenon, so as to identify its causes and parameters and to coordinate efforts with a view to developing guidelines for effective measures to eradicate that plague.

The United Nations is also the appropriate body to define our responsibilities and obligations in that regard. The signing, ratification and scrupulous enforcement by all Member States of the 12 United Nations instruments aimed at combating terrorism are perhaps the most viable means for establishing a solid common ground to combat and conquer terrorism.

In that context, I wish to take this opportunity to express once again our condolences and sympathy to the friendly people and Government of the United States and to the families of all the victims of that heinous act of terrorism. We share with them their anguish and the hope that their fortitude will help them overcome their pain and loss.

In the meantime, Kuwait reaffirms its longstanding core position condemning all acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We also categorically renounce all acts of violence and extremism, as they contravene not only international norms and treaties but also the tolerant teachings of Islam and its compassionate value system, as well as other religions, humanitarian concepts and civilized values.

Kuwait welcomes Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) within the context of Kuwait's cooperation with the ongoing international efforts to fight terrorism and, pursuant to its provisions, has put a number of important new steps and measures into effect. They include the enactment of a bill to combat money laundering and the adoption of practical measures to regulate fund-raising activities in order to ensure that those activities are not exploited or illegally used for any objective other than their legitimate and declared intent. Furthermore, for its part, Kuwait has answered all the queries of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee. We have provided to the Committee all the information and notations that clarify our national laws and legislation enacted by the Government to combat terrorist acts and to prosecute their pe petrators.

Within the same context and in order to consolidate world efforts in combating terrorism, I wish to reiterate Kuwait's support for the idea of convening an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations aimed at reaching an agreement on a clear and specific definition of terrorism. The primary purpose of that aim is to distinguish between terrorism as a phenomenon that endangers international peace and security and the right of peoples to legitimate struggle in resisting foreign occupation in order to attain their rights to self-determination, as set forth in the Charter and in international law.

In this regard, Kuwait condemns the insidious campaign orchestrated against our sister State, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by certain American and Western media sectors. For our part, however, we pay tribute to the Kingdom for its valuable role and significant contributions to the fight against terrorism and to efforts to achieve peace and security in the region.

The success of our global efforts to eradicate terrorism depends in large measure on the ability of the international community to effectively address major issues and challenges that have become a source of despair, misery, frustration, isolation and perceived injustice felt by a number of people in all parts of the world.

An elusive challenge that continues to stand out is the constant deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The escalating confrontations have reached a level that threatens peace and security in the Middle East region as a whole. The brutal practices of the Israeli occupation forces, including the unwarranted excessive use of force against the Palestinian people, the deliberate destruction of the institutions and infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority, in clear violation of United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, have resulted in exacerbating the economic and social crises sustained by the Palestinians for more than five decades. Large-scale round-ups, house demolitions, curfews, bombardment of civilian neighbourhoods, incursions into villages, town and cities and helicopter gunship assaults on civilians have become daily events for the individual Palestinian citizen on the street. Indeed, those acts have become routine stories in radio and television news.

We have silently resigned ourselves to that. It seems that the international community has been numbed into accepting that way of life for defenceless Palestinians. But unfortunately all Israeli practices seem to be emanating from an entrenched precept that Israel is immune to all accountability, exempted from all jurisdictions and shielded from all criticism and condemnation by the United Nations or the world's major Powers.

Against that background, Kuwait reaffirms its commitment to the pan-Arab position adopted at the recent Beirut Arab Summit, which endorsed the initiative put forward by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdel Aziz, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and Chief of the Saudi National Guard. Kuwait remains committed to supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent State on their national territory with Jerusalem as their capital. Kuwait will continue to demand full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and Lebanese territory.

World history and experience have amply demonstrated that force alone, regardless of the degree of brutality, will not bring about peace and security. The only viable option is restoring legitimate rights to their rightful owners and implementing peace. Perhaps the best assurance for a secure future requires long-term good-will investments in the present.

Kuwait welcomed with satisfaction the decision adopted by the most recent Arab summit, held in Lebanon in March 2002, on the situation between Iraq

and Kuwait. In that decision, the Arab leaders welcomed Iraq's pledges to respect the independence, sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the State of Kuwait and to avert any action that might lead to the recurrence of the events of 1990. Arab leaders also demanded that Iraq cooperate in finding an expeditious and final solution to the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and hostages and the return of stolen Kuwaiti property as set forth in relevant Security Council resolutions. But, to our deep regret, that decision has not been implemented. The Government of Iraq has not as yet carried out its pledges, especially in regard to Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees.

That long-running humanitarian question can bear no further delay in view of its traumatic implications for the families of the victims, who do not know the fate of their loved ones. The Iraqi Government continues to refuse to cooperate with the United Nations mechanisms established to deal with the matter. Assessing the approach followed by the Iraqi Government, the Secretary-General concluded in the final paragraph of his most recent report to the Security Council pursuant to paragraph 14 of Council resolution 1284 (1999), contained in document S/2002/931 of 15 August 2002, that

> "Despite the encouraging agreements at the Arab Summit in Beirut, Iraq's words on the fate of the missing persons are yet to be matched by tangible deeds. There still is a window of opportunity to address humanitarian issues, such as that of missing persons, in good faith. Iraq should use this opportunity to restore its credibility on the outstanding humanitarian issues." (*para. 40*)

In that context, Kuwait welcomes the efforts and steps undertaken by the United Nations in preparation for the return of Kuwait's State archives from Iraq pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions. Despite the fact that Iraq has denied over the past 11 years that it had seized the archives, we consider its acknowledgement that it holds the archives and its intention to return them to be an important step towards carrying out Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999). Irrespective of Iraq's motives for returning the archives and other Kuwaiti State documents, it is our hope that this step will be followed by other positive actions leading to the release of our prisoners and those of third countries. Only then can this dossier be closed. I wish to stress here that the humanitarian issue of our prisoners has dominated the national agenda of the Government and the people of Kuwait since liberation.

Regarding other relevant issues, Kuwait has welcomed the dialogue between the United Nations and Iraq, and we hope that this exercise will lead to the implementation of the rest of the key obligations, including the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and other outstanding matters.

Kuwait thinks that Iraq's strict and scrupulous implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions and the admission of United Nations weapons inspectors back into Iraq would spare our region the horrors of a war which we do not want. Such a war would only lead to the exacerbation of the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq and to the escalation of tension and instability in the region.

Kuwait also welcomes the prudent approach outlined by President George Bush of the United States in his statement before the General Assembly yesterday, in which he requested the Security Council to fulfil its legal and political responsibilities within the context of relevant Council resolutions regarding Iraq. The Security Council undoubtedly has the power to do so. We call upon the Security Council to perform that legitimate role. Meanwhile, we demand that Iraq fully and strictly implement all relevant Security Council resolutions in the interest of security and stability in the region and in order to avert the dangers it faces.

Because of its keen interest in maintaining and bolstering security and stability in our region, the State of Kuwait emphasizes again its support for all efforts to resolve by peaceful means the disagreement between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran over the disputed islands. In that context, we welcome the mutual visits by ranking officials of both countries. We hope that such visits and direct contacts will help the parties to create a favourable climate for confidence-building between the two countries.

The world economic landscape has been quite turbulent over the past year. Reports issued by numerous specialized international institutions show that many countries, including some developed countries, have begun to suffer from a global economic slowdown. That in turn has led to mounting economic

and social burdens on many States due to growing imbalances and disparities between the economies of countries of the North and those of the South. While the countries of the North continue to enjoy economic prosperity and better standards of living for their peoples, countries of the South continue to suffer from poverty, famine, unemployment, environmental degradation, severe shortages of drinking water and widespread pandemics such as those of HIV/AIDS and malaria, in addition to a whole range of other problems that impede their efforts towards sustainable development. It is our hope that the decisions and plans of action recently adopted at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, held at Johannesburg in August and September, and at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Mexico in February, will help bolster efforts and strengthen bonds of cooperation between the North and the South with a view to laying the underpinnings of a new partnership that contributes to the stabilization and growth of economic relations and to establishing the basis for an equitable world trade system that sets out the responsibilities and obligations of all sides.

Perhaps one of the most pressing demands at present to shore up the economic structures of the developing countries is that the developed nations fulfil their obligation to provide meaningful financial and technical aid to the developing world. That includes bilateral arrangements and understandings with international financial institutions and organizations to alleviate the debt burden of developing countries and the cancellation of the debts of the poorest nations. Also, any tariffs or other obstacles to access for the products of those countries to developed countries' markets should be removed. Furthermore, developing countries should have easier access to information and technologies that would help them solve their problems and became integrated into the world economy. Such steps would prevent the marginalization of the developing countries and least developed countries and would help put them back on the road to development.

In this regard, Kuwait draws satisfaction from the fact that it tops the list of Arab States on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Arab human development index for the current year. The Arab Human Development Report was published by the UNDP in cooperation with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. The report drew on a whole range of indices including health, educatio acquisition of technical knowledge and per capi income. The Government of Kuwait will be guided b the report's indicators and, in cooperation with o National Assembly, which is the legislative authority our country, will maintain its efforts to impro economic and social conditions to the benefit Kuwaiti citizens and their well-being.

I wish to place on record our sense of pride carrying out all our international obligations. particular, Kuwait is a robust contributor to th development programmes of many developing nation Furthermore, we are a vibrant player in ensuring stable and balanced global oil market with a view ensuring equitable and universal economi development. Also, in line with its Arab and Islami heritage and given the imperatives of kinship, Kuwa has never hesitated to reach out to meet its full offici and unofficial obligations towards the Palestinia people in the Palestinian territories and towards th people of Afghanistan. It is now our hope that th Afghan people, following the recent developments i their country, will be able to live in security an stability after their long and deep suffering due to wa and internal conflict. Let us hope that the country wi now channel all its resources into nationa reconstruction in order to make up for those long year of conflict and hostilities.

Inasmuch as the peoples of the world differ i their religion, culture and ethnicity, they are similar i their aspirations, ambitions and hopes. We all seek t live in freedom, dignity and safety. We all yearn for world in which peace, security and justice prevail Translating that vision and hope into reality require accelerating the pace of concerted global action to mee the lofty purposes and principles defined in the Charte of the United Nations.

In addition, the United Nations Millennium Summit Declaration must be translated into a concrete reality that satisfies the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the world. We as countries believe tha ultimately we all are accountable to Allah, His name be praised and glorified, the Creator of the universe. We are also accountable to our peoples in terms of fulfilling their legitimate aspirations in a world of prevailing security and peace.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Tang Jianxuan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Tang Jiaxuan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, Sir, please allow me to offer my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly. I wish also to express my gratitude to Mr. Han Seung-soo, President of the previous session of the Assembly.

I wish to congratulate the Swiss Confederation on having joined the United Nations and also to welcome the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, which will soon become a Member of the Organization.

The opening of this session coincides with the first anniversary of the events of 11 September. Over the past year, the international campaign against terrorism has made headway, and now we should not only ponder ways to eradicate the global scourge of terrorism, but also take a broader view of the security issues facing humankind and seek to achieve lasting peace and universal security.

At present, the international security situation is undergoing profound changes. Security has begun to take on wider connotations. While traditional military antagonism and conflicts have yet to be eliminated, a variety of non-traditional security concerns have become increasingly prominent. Security is no longer a purely military concern. It has permeated politics, economics, finance, science, technology, culture and many other areas.

Security is no longer a zero-sum game. Its mutuality is obviously on the increase, as countries have come to realize that they have common security interests and feel a greater sense of interdependence.

We must overhaul the tools at our disposal to achieve security. Military means alone have proved inadequate in meeting the massive and complex security challenges facing us. The indiscriminate use of force can only lead to greater trouble in our world.

This new situation calls for new ideas in the area of safeguarding security. We in China believe in a new security concept that features mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation.

By mutual trust, we mean that countries should rise above their differing ideologies and social systems, abandon the cold-war mentality and the power politics mindset, and refrain from harbouring suspicion and hostility towards each other. They should hold frequent dialogues and mutual briefings on their security and defence policies or on the major actions they are about to take.

By mutual benefit, we mean that a country should respect the security interests of others while pursuing its own, and also help to create conditions for enhancing the security of others while making itself more secure — thus achieving universal security.

By equality, we mean that all countries — large or small, strong or weak — should respect each other, treat each other as equals and refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs, so that international relations can become more democratized.

By cooperation, we mean that countries should resolve their disputes through peaceful negotiations, engage in extensive and close cooperation on their shared security concerns and work to prevent wars and conflicts.

All in all, our new security concept is aimed at increasing mutual trust through dialogue and at promoting common security through cooperation.

It is in the spirit of this new security concept that we in China have been working hard to promote mechanisms for a regional security dialogue and cooperation, actively participating in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, and endeavouring to establish an Asia-Pacific security framework that is for dialogue and against confrontation.

China is actively committed to international arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation process. Not long ago, the Chinese Government promulgated the Regulations on Export Controls of Missiles and Related Items and Technologies and its Control List. The Chinese Government will make further improvements on its export-management mechanisms for biological and chemical dual-use items. We call on the international community actively to undertake dialogue and cooperation in the spirit of this new security concept, in a joint effort to tackle the major security concerns of the day.

We should press ahead with international cooperation against terrorism and curb the threat of international terrorism once and for all.

Counter-terrorism should be pursued on the basis of international law and of the norms governing

international relations, allowing the United Nations and its Security Council to play a leading role. It should take a comprehensive approach, with a focus on eliminating the root causes of terrorism. Efforts should be made to prevent the arbitrary enlargement of the scope of the counter-terrorism campaign, but proven terrorists, including the East Turkestan terrorist forces — trained, armed and bankrolled by the Taliban and Al Qaeda — must be resolutely stamped out.

We should step up dialogue and reconciliation processes and facilitate the settlement of regional hot-spot issues.

China supports the Palestinian people and their just cause to regain their legitimate national rights and to establish their own State. We support the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. We are opposed to violence targeting innocent civilians, and we reject responding to violence with violence.

We stand for a political settlement of the question of Iraq. The United Nations should play an important role in this regard. Iraq should implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in a faithful and strict manner.

We hope that India and Pakistan will soon resume dialogue on the basis of equality and mutual respect and resolve all their differences, including that over Kashmir, through peaceful means.

We will continue to work constructively for a lasting peace in Afghanistan and its post-war rehabilitation. We support the important role of the United Nations in this regard.

We should strengthen exchanges and dialogues among different civilizations and thereby avert conflict or confrontation. Differences among diverse civilizations are a basic characteristic of humanity.

We have every reason to treat the achievements of various civilizations kindly and to promote exchanges among them on the basis of respect for diversity. Everyone is encouraged to draw upon the strength of others with a view to realizing common development.

Peace and development go hand in hand. Many of the problems we face today may be development-related. In coping with these challenges, it is all the more important to look to development for answers. In the past year, the United Nations has held a series of important meetings on development such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development. What is needed, right now, is to translate the programmes and commitments into reality.

In the past year, regional economic cooperation has continued to move forward. We feel especially happy about the launching of the African Union, convinced that Africa will now take fresh strides on the road to development. At present, our development tasks have become more pressing. The widening wealth gap in the world must be reversed. Frequent economic and social shocks must be dealt with. The sharpening clashes between economic development, on the one hand, and resources and the environment, on the other, must be allayed. The international order and the rules of the game, which do not fairly reflect the needs of developing countries, must be changed.

We would like to make the following propositions. First, to establish a global partnership geared to development. Governments, international organizations, transnational corporations and non-governmental groups are all parties to the cause of development. The North and the South, the aid-recipient countries and international aid institutions, should be equal and cooperative partners in dealing with the global economic slowdown. The developed countries ought to lend developing countries a helping hand. The new round of multilateral trade talks should be seized as an important opportunity for forging such a new partnership.

Secondly, to promote a balanced and steady development in the context of economic globalization. The international community needs to reform current roles in the world economy, strengthen guidance and management of the globalization process and promote a win-win situation and coexistence among countries.

Thirdly, to strengthen the developing countries' capacity for self-development. Developing countries should opt for a development path suited to them and strive to catch up with the tide of global economic development. The international community should respect the right of developing countries to independently choose a development path, and help them with capacity-building.

Fourthly, in order to continue on the path of sustainable development, we should promote a balanced development of the economy, population, resources and the environment. Efforts to address the

environmental problems of individual countries should be combined with those aimed at global concerns. Fifthly, to enhance comprehensive development of the people. Human resources are the primary resources for advancing science and technology and for realizing economic and social development. In formulating development strategies, countries should make the people their top priority and main beneficiary.

The Communist Party of China will soon hold its sixteenth national Congress, the very first in the new century. Standing in the forefront of the historical tide and displaying a spirit of progressing with the times, this party Congress will draw up a new blueprint for accelerating socialist modernization in China. Our guiding thought is to consistently represent the development requirements of China's advanced productive forces, represent the orientation of China's advanced culture and represent the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. Our historic mission is to accelerate the drive for modernization, complete the reunification of the motherland, maintain world peace and promote common development.

The first 10 to 20 years of this century present China with an important strategic window of opportunity for its development. While taking development as our number one priority, we must grasp the opportunities, deepen reform, open the country still wider to the outside world, promote development and maintain stability.

We will continue to pursue an independent foreign policy of peace, actively develop friendly relations in cooperation with all countries in the world on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, and facilitate international dialogue and cooperation, thus contributing constructively to a fairer and more equitable international order.

There is but one China in the world. Both the mainland and Taiwan belong to that one China, and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity brook no division. The Chinese Government adheres to the basic policy of peaceful reunification and one country, two systems; and President Jiang Zemin's eight point proposal on how to develop "cross-strait" relations and promote a peaceful reunification of the motherland for the current stage. We are firm in our opposition to all forms of Taiwanese independence activities and will tolerate no attempt to separate Taiwan from the rest of China in any fashion. All acts of Taiwan independence are doomed to failure and our grand cause of national reunification will triumph.

The President: I now call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Choi Sung-hong.

Mr. Choi Sung-hong (Republic of Korea): The tragic events of 11 September 2001 awakened the international community to the gravity of a new menace to world peace and security. The lighting of the eternal flame during the commemorative service in Battery Park was mirrored by the outpouring of sympathy from around the globe and the world became one again, reaching out to those who lost their loved ones on that fateful day.

The global community responded promptly and decisively to the scourge of terrorism. Over the past year, international cooperation has been strengthened in our relentless campaign against terrorism. The Security Council, in particular, has played a commendable role in this process through its Counter-Terrorism Committee. The Republic of Korea has been an active member of the international coalition against terrorism. We are now working with other countries to contribute to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

As we conduct our resolute fight against terrorism, we should also consider that deprivation, lack of good governance and marginalization from the process of globalization can serve as a breeding ground for fanatics who can go so far as to take their own lives just to harm others. The international community should, therefore, take a holistic approach, while bearing in mind at all times that terrorism cannot be justified by any cause or under any circumstances whatsoever.

The events of 11 September have also brought home to the world the appalling dangers of weapons of mass destruction falling into the wrong hands. Moreover, the prevailing international reality underscores the urgent need to make progress in disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

It is essential that we achieve universality of non-proliferation regimes — including the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention — while ensuring full compliance by all

States parties to such regimes. We also hope that a total ban on nuclear testing and fissile material production will be achieved through the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and an expeditious conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. In that regard, I would like to underline the Republic of Korea's full commitment to strengthening multilateral collaboration to promote the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Since its inception, the United Nations has played a key role in securing peace and stability in the troubled corners of the world. Indeed, the work of the United Nations in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building has expanded in recent years.

East Timor is the latest success for which the United Nations deserves praise. As a Member State committed to the coalition of the willing, the Republic of Korea has actively taken part in the United Nations efforts in East Timor and other parts of the world. Moreover, our overall financial contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations has grown approximately tenfold over the past three years. The Republic of Korea intends to strengthen its involvement in these crucial United Nations activities.

The Korean peninsula is still one of the world's most volatile areas. Nevertheless, President Kim Dae-jung's unwavering pursuit of his engagement policy is fundamentally reshaping inter-Korean relations. That engagement policy is, in essence, a strategy for peace through engagement, designed to cope with the multiple challenges inherent in inter-Korean relations on the road to eventual unification. As such, it aims at fostering inter-Korean reconciliation, promoting cooperation and exchanges, reducing tension and building durable peace on the peninsula.

The highlight of the engagement policy was the holding of the historic summit between South Korea and North Korea in June 2000. The summit set in motion an inter-Korean peace process. After ups and downs along the way, the peace process is finally back on track and moving forward again. Inter-Korean meetings at various levels have resumed, as have exchanges in all areas. In fact, on this very day, at Mount Kumgang, the fifth round of reunions between separated family members is taking place. Next week, South Korea and North Korea will hold the long-anticipated ground-breaking ceremonies marking the start of construction work for the reconnecting of railways and roads that have remained severed for five decades. Since those projects literally involve a breakthrough in the heavily fortified border and require a certain level of military-to-military cooperation, they will hold not only great practical benefit but also tremendous symbolic significance. As we look ahead to the completion of the trans-Korean railway, this clearly promises to have far-reaching interregional implications for accomplishing the vision of an iron silk road, a rail link joining Asia and Europe.

The overall progress report to date amply demonstrates that the engagement policy works. The Korean people on both sides of the peninsula today enjoy a stronger peace than ever, and the risk of war is at an all-time low since the end of the Korean War, in 1950. However, it is not yet time to be complacent, as we have still a long way to go if the peace process is to prove irreversible and fully sustainable.

One important challenge to the peace process relates to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We continue to believe that the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework holds the best hope for removing concerns over nuclear proliferation from the Korean peninsula. However, at the moment, the Agreed Framework has reached a critical juncture. As the light water reactor project progresses, it is now essential that full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency begin without further delay for the implementation of the safeguards requirements of the Agreed Framework.

The path to world peace runs through more equitable economic and social development. In that regard, we attach great importance to the United Nations Agenda for Development and, in particular, to the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey in March of this year, was a success in the area of enhancing shared awareness of the primary responsibility of developing countries themselves, as well as in emphasizing the need for more substantial input from developed countries. The Political Declaration and Plan of Implementation adopted at the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development are also of great significance, as they have set out a time-bound plan of action for humanity's quest to preserve the planet for posterity. The unprecedented advances in information and communication technologies are also

widening the gap between the front runners and those who lag behind. We hope that the United Nations and other relevant international organizations will become more proactive in bridging the digital divide between developed and developing nations.

The last century witnessed the steady advance and triumph of democracy and human rights as universal values around the globe. As it has been so eloquently put, liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth indeed. The human rights situation in any given country is no longer an exclusively domestic affair. The issue of human rights has become a priority agenda item for the international community. During the last session of the General Assembly, special attention was paid to the human rights of such vulnerable groups as children and the elderly. We sincerely hope that the pledges made at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, as well as at the special session on children, will be translated into concrete action.

The Republic of Korea has a firm commitment to international cooperation for the promotion of democracy and human rights. We plan to host the second Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Seoul in November of this year. We are working with other Convening Group countries to ensure that this proves a momentous occasion in the protection, consolidation and advancement of democracy the world over. We also welcome the renewed commitment of the international community to combat such growing problems of horrific transnational crime as the trafficking in persons.

Over the past half century, the United Nations has made outstanding contributions to causes of great importance to humankind. However, the world body cannot possibly meet all expectations. Given the limited means and resources available to it, the United Nations should focus on areas in which it can excel, making the best use of its comprehensive mandate and the universality of its membership. In that regard, the Republic of Korea strongly supports the ongoing reforms that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been pursuing with a view to achieving a more effective and efficient United Nations.

In closing, I would like to say that the United Nations is the embodiment of globalism and the epitome of multilateral cooperation. As such, the international community looks to the United Nations for guidance and effective action in the whole spectrum of areas under its mandate.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its firm commitment to working in concert with other Member States to make the United Nations more relevant and efficient, and thus better able to meet the challenges ahead — global challenges indeed.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Igor S. Ivanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): One year has passed since the tragic events that took place on 11 September 2001 in the United States of America shook the world and demonstrated the magnitude and brutality of the global threat of international terrorism. During the past year the world became fully aware of the challenges that humankind was facing as we entered the twenty-first century. It was a year during which the international community came together and began to take decisive action against terrorism.

While paying tribute to the memory of all of the victims of the terrorism that has left a bloody trail throughout the world, we must now take stock of the initial results of the joint anti-terrorist campaign and, most important, outline our objectives in strengthening the foundations of international security and stability.

The most important outcome of the coming together of States to achieve common goals — unprecedented since the Second World War — is clear today. A broad international anti-terrorist coalition has been established and is actively functioning; it has already demonstrated its effectiveness in Afghanistan, a country that international terrorists of various affiliations had transformed into their own personal lair. Our common objective is not only to preserve the experience of interaction acquired within the framework of the coalition — avoiding such unilateral actions as might undermine it — but also to transform the anti-terrorist alliance into a supportive mechanism of effective security and cooperation for the new millennium.

The United Nations must certainly be a pivotal element of such a mechanism. Indeed, the United Nations is called upon to continue to guarantee that, in combating new threats and challenges, the efforts of

the international community rest on a solid basis of international law.

We must acknowledge — and the past year has been very instructive in this regard — that a great deal of hard work awaits us. It will be possible to put insurmountable obstacles in the way of fanatics and extremists who spread death and destruction only if we can reach general agreement on core issues relating to the world order. In this context, the role of the United Nations is, indeed, irreplaceable.

The fact that the process of implementing the fundamental anti-terrorist resolution — Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) — is under way is of critical importance. That resolution is binding on all States, and we must now seek to achieve its unconditional implementation by all States.

A priority task in the war on terrorism is the strengthening of its international legal framework. First and foremost, there is a need to ensure the genuinely universal character of existing anti-terrorist conventions.

Having ratified the 1999 Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, Russia is now completing the process of accession to those international instruments. At the same time, we are seriously concerned about the lack of real progress in negotiating a comprehensive convention on combating terrorism and a convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism.

The well-known differences in the approaches of States to the provisions of such instruments could certainly be fully reconciled. They should not overshadow the objective, which is pressing for all of us, of establishing a legal basis to counter terrorism in all its manifestations — a basis that would be in keeping with the realities of today's world. Russia is continuing to make resolute efforts to achieve that objective.

It is the obligation of all States to protect the rights and freedoms of their citizens, the most important of these being the right to life. But it is precisely the lives of ordinary people that are threatened by terrorists, and each year new names are added to the list of victims. The international community can no longer tolerate this. It is our obligation to provide our citizens with the right to reliable protection against terrorism.

Such an objective can be achieved only if all States agree on a range of specific measures under United Nations auspices. There is now a need to draw up an effective code to protect human rights against terrorism. Some of these measures have already been discussed by the international community, including in this forum. Others will require consideration in a broader context. The most important consideration, however, is that we should agree on a unified system of values and measures shared by all States.

The results of the war against terrorism will be tangible only if we act in concert at all levels — global, regional and national. The anti-terrorist cooperation mechanisms aimed at preventing the spread of terrorism in Central Asia, including those within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are gaining momentum and thus provide clear evidence of that fact. There is a great deal of potential in the new partnership between Russia and the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The field of anti-terrorism is an integral part of our continuous dialogue and cooperation with the leading countries of the world, including the United States, China, India and the States members of the European Union. We are confident that the development of such interaction at many levels will promote a climate of confidence, security and cooperation in all parts of the world.

The stability and credibility of the emerging international system of the twenty-first century will depend directly on the maintenance and strengthening of strategic stability. This fundamental objective was advanced by the signing, by the Presidents of Russia and of the United States, at their May meeting in Moscow, of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, which was a specific, major contribution by the leading nuclear Powers to nuclear disarmament.

It is also very important to ensure the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The danger of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons or their components falling into the irresponsible hands of terrorists increases international terrorism's potential to cause devastation. This means that there is a need to step up efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles.

By acting jointly and responsibly, we have already achieved a great deal. When we speak about the establishment of new regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and for arms control, we by no means wish to imply a renunciation of regimes and agreements already in effect. They are our shared protective mechanism — a mechanism that is very reliable and has stood the test of time. Unjustified removal of the key elements of the international legal framework of non-proliferation can aggravate the international military and strategic situation and undermine global security.

Furthermore, we should "universalize" the most important agreements on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on comprehensive nuclear test ban. The missile sphere needs a sustainable negotiating process aimed at concluding an international arrangement on a global regime of missile and missile technology non-proliferation.

The prevention of the deployment of weapons in outer space forms an integral part of the non-proliferation process. Together with a number of our partners we suggest that a comprehensive agreement be worked out aimed at preserving outer space as a zone free from any kind of weapons. We are confident that this proposal serves the interests of all States, and expect that it will enjoy wide support.

Since its establishment, the United Nations has been engaged in the settlement of regional conflicts. Those so-called local problems have long turned into one of the main threats to international stability. Terrorism, political extremism, and economic and social degradation are their customary companions. Certainly, the primary responsibility in any settlement rests with the relevant parties, but multilateral mechanisms have also repeatedly demonstrated their effectiveness in the restoration of peace and concord. A tangible progress made with the United Nations visible involvement in the post-Taliban reconstruction of Afghanistan is one of our common accomplishments. We can add to this the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of major practical decisions in support of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East and the resolution of crises in a number of African countries.

And yet, we are still far from a radical decrease in the number and intensity of armed conflicts. Hard work, requiring great human as well as material and financial resources, is awaiting us. But the most important here is the presence of a strong political will to implement the provisions of the United Nations Charter pertaining to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Experience shows that no matter how complex international crises and conflicts may be, whatever challenges and threats they may be fraught with, they can be settled with the aid of United Nations instruments and on the basis of international law. This fully applies to the situation around Iraq, which has long required political settlement in strict compliance with the Security Council resolutions.

The entire international community benefits from a steady enhancement of the leading role of our Organization in peacemaking. We cannot relax our attention to this task.

At all times and throughout the world, terrorism and extremism have tried to justify themselves with continuous social and economic instability and poverty. While recognizing the existence of these serious problems we should state most resolutely that terrorism does not and will not have any justification. At the same time, the creation of a sustainable and fair global financial and economic structure would, certainly, help combat many dangerous challenges to mankind. The latest major international forums — the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterey, World Food Summit in Rome, World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg — adopted decisions designed to uproot the causes of the most threatening disparities in the world. The next step is to implement the agreements we have reached.

Equally sweeping are the tasks that face us in the field of environmental protection. Natural disasters that afflicted many regions of our planet this summer have demonstrated again that the solution of environmental issues cannot be put off unless we want to endanger the very survival of future generations. This sphere also depends on multilateral efforts that exclude the egoism of individual States.

The initiative of Russian President Vladimir V. Putin on holding in autumn 2003 a World Conference on Climate Change in Moscow is designed to coordinate our efforts in this field.

A year ago, the Russian Federation called on the international community from the podium of the United Nations General Assembly to create a global system of counteraction to present-day threats and challenges that would be aimed at tackling real issues in the sphere of security and at meeting the vital interests of each and every State. This system would provide for long-term international stability and sustainable development.

To be efficient, such a system needs a generally recognized coordinating centre capable of rallying the international community. And we do have such a centre — the United Nations with its unique legitimacy, universality and experience. Our common task is to unite around the United Nations to provide it with the necessary potential and resources and to develop as much as possible its internal reserves.

Today, we can state with satisfaction that the global system is already evolving and the beginning of this process is largely successful. We suggest that an additional impetus should be given to this process and a resolution to encourage a most prompt creation of a global system of counteraction to present-day threats and challenges should be adopted at this session of the General Assembly. By doing so, we will direct all States towards the joint elaboration of its general shape and parameters. This is even more relevant because some of its parameters are already visible.

It is apparent that the system to be created must be:

- Global, as modern challenges in the context of globalization pose a universal threat, and should be addressed at the global level.
- Comprehensive in scope, as each of the modern threats bears a huge destructive potential and all such problems without exceptions should be embraced by the system.
- Holistic in approach, as quite often the new threats and challenges are directly interrelated.
- Universal in participation.

Finally, the system should become a reflection of the international rule of law, as its power will be built on principles and regulations of international law, the United Nations Charter above all.

We bear grave responsibility to future generations, and the model of world order we will establish is destined to influence the life on our planet for decades. As for Russia, we have made our choice. This is the choice in favour of a democratic, multipolar world order, which would guarantee sustainable development and equal security for all States; a world order formed on the basis of the extensive structure of multilateral institutions integrated within the framework of the United Nations.

We hope that the decisions of this General Assembly session will mark an important stage of this process.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jorge Castañeda Gutman, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Mr. Castañeda (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico wishes to welcome two new Member States. Their presence buttresses the universal mission of the United Nations. Our congratulations to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. This represents a further expression of the right to self-determination and a reflection of its people's resolve for independence. Also, we welcome the decision of the people of the Swiss Confederation to become a full Member of the United Nations.

The international community is facing a defining moment. A year after the attack on the United States, in which men and women from more than 80 different countries perished, we have the responsibility to decide together the direction the international system should take in the coming years.

Mexico is aware of the magnitude of the challenges that the Organization faces today: the urgency of returning a human focus to globalization, of fighting the poverty that divides the world, of making possible development that respects the environment, of finding formulas for resolving the many conflicts and wars that now affect millions of people, of effectively fighting international terrorism and of guaranteeing respect for the rights and fundamental freedoms of every human being.

Responding to those challenges in a responsible and visionary way is more important today than ever before. At the present time, anger or the inevitable difficulties of consensus-building may cloud judgement or give rise to pressure to act precipitously or unilaterally. Mexico is convinced that, at this time, the only legitimate path of action is that based on a

multilateral approach that favours agreement and collective action, for the benefit of the international community as a whole as well as of each our nations individually. Therefore, Mexico reaffirms its commitment to the system of international security that gives the Security Council the responsibility of maintaining world peace. In fulfilling that mandate, the Council must base its actions on the principles articulated in the Charter of the United Nations, such as the peaceful settlement of disputes, which has been a fundamental aspiration of the community of nations since the middle of the last century and is one of my country's most cherished ideals.

Mexico maintains that the Security Council is the proper body to adopt the measures necessary to achieve a lasting solution to the question of Iraq. Therefore, we value the statement made yesterday by President George Bush, which included a recognition of the importance that debate and collective decision-making will have in the coming days and weeks in determining the path to be taken concerning Iraq. However, we cannot fail to recognize that the scope of action open to us will also involve complex challenges for Council members and for the entire international community.

We unequivocally condemn — as have most other nations — Iraq's continued non-compliance with Council resolutions concerning disarmament and the renunciation of weapons of mass destruction, and we reaffirm the importance of that nation's immediate compliance — without preconditions — with Council resolutions concerning the return of United Nations inspectors. Nevertheless, we must recognize that non-compliance with United Nations resolutions has occurred at other junctures, at other times and in other places.

Today, we believe it is indispensable that the Security Council have the necessary time and support to seek the return of the inspectors, and we therefore support President Jacques Chirac's recent proposal to set a specific time frame for meeting that objective. Moreover, as a responsible and committed Council member, Mexico believes that any decision arising from possible Iraqi non-compliance with the relevant resolutions should be taken based on two indispensable conditions. First, there must be a clearer evaluation of Iraq's true weapons capacity — including both technology and delivery systems — and of its intention to use them or the capacity of terrorist groups to gain access to them. It could be based on reports issued by United Nations inspection mechanisms, with additional information from individual countries. Secondly, there must be agreement among Council member, as well as other countries directly involved, on the steps that must be taken in the light of the corroboration of those facts or in the event of Iraq's refusal to permit the return of inspectors to its territory.

Mexico believes that unilateral military action, taken without prior consultation with the Security Council, would undermine the foundations of the new architecture of international security and could affect the consensus in favour of the battle against international terrorism that followed the attacks perpetrated a year ago against the United States.

Mexico comes before the Assembly with the determination to assume an active role in building a new world order. Its willingness for dialogue with other nations is a reflection of the democratic change that has occurred in my country, which has also given Mexico new confidence in its ability to contribute to attaining the objectives of the international community. The determination to play a more active role in the world has led us to incorporate issues and perspectives with global dimensions and impact as key elements of our national interests. Fostering world economic development, promoting and defending human rights and strengthening democracy and sustainable development are examples of our commitment, which transcends borders and sovereignties. The efforts that we undertake to make global ideals reality will also enable us to promote more vigorously our national values.

Mexico's redoubled international activity has been reflected over the past months in a series of actions that mark a milestone in the history of our foreign relations. One of our projects with greatest strategic vision is the Puebla-Panama Plan, whose objective is to coordinate the efforts of the public, social and private sectors of Mexico and of the Central American countries in implementing joint development and investment projects.

With the same determination, we are promoting a sense of community in North America in order to articulate shared values towards a common vision of regional development that is coherent, wide-ranging and long-term. In that context, we believe that the gradual negotiation of an immigration agreement to bring order and legality to the movement of labour in

the region is an urgent priority. From Mexico's standpoint, labour flows between countries must be viewed as an opportunity to redirect the globalization process and to reduce the gap that separates developed nations from less-developed societies.

My country has also launched an extensive campaign of cultural promotion abroad. In that way, Mexico is seeking to present to the world the wealth, diversity and vitality of its culture in order to build bridges with other nations and regions. The strengthening of cooperation and cultural ties among our countries must be a priority for us all. That is why we welcome the return of the United States to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The international activism displayed by Mexico for almost two years now has been particularly evident in more intense work within multilateral forums. In carrying out that work, we have often been able to build on the foundations established by previous Administrations. But there is undoubtedly a new spirit and a new purpose in the role that multilateral activism plays in Mexico's international strategy.

Our most important task in the multilateral sphere lies here within the United Nations. The Government of Mexico is proud to have received the support of the community of nations for our country's election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. In that and other forums, we are actively participating in the building of a new international architecture that will govern relations among nations in the coming decades.

Mexico's participation in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum — in which we have participated since 1993 — is another eloquent example of our international activism. In October, our country will host the tenth meeting of the leaders of that mechanism, where we shall continue to promote actions that foster greater prosperity for the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region.

Mexico has also vigorously promoted the relaunching of international economic negotiations. The International Conference on Financing for Development, held in March at Monterrey, promoted a broad and inclusive alliance among States and international organizations that should make possible a higher level of financing for development, with a clear balance between national responsibilities and international cooperation. Today, the Monterrey Consensus is the basis for redirecting globalization towards growth and anti-poverty objectives, and it is the ideal tool for placing development priorities at the centre of the international agenda.

From Mexico's standpoint, the Monterrey Conference forms part of a coherent series of international summits devoted to promoting the agenda of world development. That process began last year in Doha with the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO); it grew in strength by incorporating the environmental dimension of sustainable development in Johannesburg, and it will continue with the holding of the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in Cancún, Mexico, next year. The close interrelationship among all the issues related to development was also apparent at the recent Johannesburg Summit, where the positions that President Vicente Fox put forward on behalf of Mexico were widely supported and recognized.

Mindful of the new threats to international security, the Mexican Government has also called for the security arrangements of the Americas to be updated. We have offered to host a special conference on security to be convened at the third Summit of the Americas, to take place in Mexico in May 2003.

Notwithstanding the importance of all these actions, Mexico's new role at the international level is particularly evident in our promotion of human rights and democracy. My country has stated its conviction that human rights represent absolute and universal values and that, as such, the obligation to uphold them is a duty shared by all Governments and peoples, irrespective of borders and sovereignties. Moreover, we have been consistent in these convictions. That is why, despite the mixed reaction that it has generated in Mexico, given the strong bonds of friendship that Mexican society has always enjoyed with several nations close to us, we have been compelled to express our concern about the human rights situation in those countries. One of the most far-reaching steps we have taken to demonstrate our commitment to the cause of human rights is the harmonization of Mexican legislation with international instruments that protect such rights. We have placed particular emphasis on the protection of such vulnerable groups as women, children, indigenous peoples and the disabled.

At the same time, we have abandoned the defensive attitude that prevented us from entering into

dialogue with other nations and multilateral organizations dedicated to the protection of human rights. Upon the invitation of the Mexican Government, many representatives of international human rights organizations have visited our country. In the same spirit of openness, the Mexican Government signed a framework agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In the context of efforts of the Mexican Government to strengthen the rule of law, the Mexican Senate is currently considering a draft constitutional amendment that would allow our country to ratify the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court. This amendment would involve recognition of the jurisdiction of international courts created by treaties to which Mexico is party and ensure compliance with their resolutions and rulings. The amendment represents a decisive step towards incorporating and ensuring the effectiveness of the standards of international law at the domestic level. Mexico welcomes the recent entry into force of the International Criminal Court, which reflects the resolve of the community of nations to create an international system based on universal standards.

We believe, however, that the signing of agreements by those seeking to prevent a given category of persons from being subject to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court represents a grave step backwards for international law. It threatens the universal scope of the provisions of the Rome Statute, distorts the spirit that led to its creation and undermines the efforts of the community of States to eliminate impunity in the cases of extremely serious crimes. We appeal to the members of the international community to assist in strengthening the authority of the International Criminal Court, which it has spent so much time and effort to build.

The defence of human rights necessarily involves the promotion of democratic freedoms. Today, we are seeing increasingly widespread recognition of the fact that representative democracy, with its institutional framework of parties, groups and civil society organizations, as well as the legal framework safeguarding the civil freedoms of association and speech, constitutes the best way of reconciling the legitimate exercise of authority with respect to those freedoms that are essential to human beings. Mexico's active part in drafting the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which was signed by the nations of the American continent in September 2001, is another example of my country's commitment to democratic principles. At the same, we are successfully promoting democratic values in other regions, as demonstrated by our work within the Community of Democracies, whose second conference is scheduled to be held in November.

The adherence of the Mexican Government and Mexican society to human rights and democracy has two mutually complementary aspects. On the one hand, it means strengthening democratic practices and institutions and human rights throughout the country, to which end we are restoring the effectiveness of the rule of law; on the other, it compels us to engage in more vigorous activism in international forums so that we may encourage full respect for human rights and democracy throughout the world. This will enable us more firmly to consolidate human rights and democracy in Mexico, so that the democratic change that we have experienced can become irreversible.

I am here today to state that my country has returned with renewed energy to the international scene. The Mexican Government has moved from defensive aloofness to constructive dialogue, with a limited international legitimacy to the exercise of diplomacy based on democratic principles and unqualified respect for human rights. The kind of world we wish to create and the steps we are willing to take — or to refrain from taking — in order to achieve it are questions that we cannot evade at this critical moment of international redefinition. Mexico reaffirms its conviction that action based on principles and agreements must take precedence over the temptations of unilateralism and that universal standards must prevail over short-term interests. Mexico's international activism, in particular its commitment to human rights and democracy, reflects the belief of the Mexican nation in the essential equality of all human beings and in the duties that it entails for all our peoples and Governments.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Şükrü Sina Gürel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

Mr. Gürel (Turkey): At the outset, I wish to join other speakers in warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. My delegation offers you its full support to the presidency's work. I also wish to pay

tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his able guidance of the last session.

It gives me great pleasure to salute here Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the two new Members of the United Nations, the Swiss Confederation and the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

Turkey is firmly convinced that, throughout this new century, the need for the United Nations will increasingly grow. It is the only multilateral Organization with universal membership dedicated to the noble aims of maintaining peace and international security, addressing global issues and establishing standards that should apply to all.

Exactly a year ago, evil in its worst form struck New York and Washington, D.C. Since the tragedy of 11 September, it has become amply clear that terrorist organizations have much broader international networks than anticipated. Terrorism has many names and faces and recognizes no boundaries. This is a phenomenon that is not confined to and cannot be identified with any particular geography, religion, race or culture. Terrorism is the most blatant violation of human rights. Nothing can ever justify terrorism and there can be no leniency towards it.

Turkey has been calling for years for intensified international cooperation against terrorism. We have been actively engaged in the work of the United Nations to fight this scourge and we commend the ongoing efforts. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), in particular, provides a clear road map with regard to the steps that need to be taken to combat terrorism more effectively.

It is incumbent upon all Member States to adopt existing international legislation and to review their relevant national laws accordingly. We urge those States that have not yet done so to become parties to the 12 international conventions on specific terrorist offences. We also look forward to the completion of the work on a comprehensive convention against international terrorism.

Preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping have gained even more priority in this era of new conflicts. Turkey has been actively participating in the efforts of the United Nations in conflict prevention and plays a significant role within peace missions mandated by the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Hence, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure prompt reaction to emerging crises and welcome the manifold considerations contained in his report (A/55/985) on the prevention of armed conflicts.

My country took over the command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul at an extremely critical juncture. We take pride in fulfilling that task and thank the other contributing nations. Indeed, all ISAF personnel are serving with a strong sense of purpose and mission. Traditionally a close friend of the Afghans, Turkey has contributed for many years to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. We salute the performance of the Transitional Authority under the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Hamid Karzai, the Afghan President.

Today we must rapidly embark upon real and tangible development efforts in Afghanistan. It is with this understanding that Turkey provides the Afghan people with assistance that is directed at developing their national potential. Likewise, efforts to build the Afghan national army and the police force as well as solidarity and unity among the ethnic groups are of crucial importance.

We feel strongly that the international community should fulfil its commitments adopted at the Tokyo International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, support His Excellency Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, in his efforts to secure greater financial assistance. The United Nations is to be commended for successfully spearheading reconstruction activity.

Turkey is located in close proximity to many of the existing conflict spots and potential new threats that are high on the United Nations agenda. Accordingly, we are closely interested in promoting peace, stability and prosperity in our part of the world, particularly in the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus.

We have been witnessing positive changes in the political and security environment of the Balkans. The multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural fabric of the Balkan countries must be preserved. We believe now is the right time for the word "Balkans" to be freed from its negative connotation and be made to

stand for such positive concepts as ethnic harmony, mutual respect and peaceful cohabitation.

We hope that the elections in the Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and those to be held in a few weeks' time in Kosovo, will be instrumental in shaping a better future for the Balkans.

Our resolve to further improve our relations with Greece through the current process of constructive dialogue remains intact. We seek to encourage and foster the spirit of friendship and cooperation so that we can make further progress. In that respect, the two countries signed a number of bilateral documents. As for the Aegean Sea, we believe that Turkish-Greek relations have indeed reached a level of maturity that could enable us to address the issues at hand on a bilateral basis. To that end, we have been discussing certain confidence-building measures and have agreed on some. We are also encouraged by the ongoing exploratory contacts.

Regarding Cyprus, we continue to support the efforts aimed at finding a just, viable, lasting and complete settlement. Cyprus is an issue between the two equal, distinct peoples on the island, namely the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots, each of which lives under its own political and democratic structures. The two peoples of Cyprus should be able to coexist and share power under a new partnership State structure on the basis of the equal status and sovereign equality of the two partner States. We will continue to support the current direct talks between the two leaders in Cyprus, which enable the two parties to search for comprehensive reconciliation without any third-party involvement. We believe that equal treatment of both sides will foster an environment that will encourage them to move towards a new partnership of equals, excluding the possibility of reverting to the situation that existed before 1974. We support the recent Turkish Cypriot proposals, which provide a sound and realistic basis for a settlement. We believe that the international community should give due consideration to these proposals, which open a new window of opportunity for the resolution of this longstanding issue.

The decision of the European Union Council to start accession negotiations with the Greek Cypriot administration, despite the illegitimacy of its claim to represent the whole island, has made an agreed settlement even more elusive. Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriot focus so far has been totally diverted to European Union membership. Membership prior to settlement would create many problems and would lead to tensions on the island and in the eastern Mediterranean in general. We have reiterated that a unilateral Greek Cypriot entry into the European Union would harm the chances for a mutually agreed settlement establishing a new partnership between the two parties. The European Union must tell the Greek Cypriots that they will not be admitted before a final settlement. That is essential if we are to make meaningful progress towards resolving the Cyprus issue.

In the aftermath of 11 September, peace and stability in the Middle East have gained even more importance and urgency. Yet the present outlook of the ongoing conflict does not leave much room for optimism. Violence persists, taking a huge toll on both sides. This year has been marked by successive terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians and the disproportionate use of force by Israel against the Palestinians. The occupation of Palestinian towns and the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure have only exacerbated the already difficult living conditions of the Palestinian people.

The parameters of peace in the Middle East are embedded in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Those resolutions have now been given fuller meaning with the adoption of Council resolution 1397 (2001), laying out the vision of two States living side by side within secure boundaries.

The international community is also encouraged by the Arab League plan adopted at its Beirut Summit, based on a vision of the coexistence of all States in the region through the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Likewise, the 24 June statement of the United States President charts the contours of a process that will lead to the two-State objective.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The international community should engage itself in encouraging and persuading all parties to the Middle East conflict on the road to lasting peace. The initiatives of the "quartet" are welcome, and Turkey, as a regional facilitator, is ready to offer its assistance in whatever way may be necessary. We need a

relaunching of the peace process, and Turkey stands ready to host a meeting to that end.

More than a decade after the liberation of Kuwait, the Iraqi problem remains unresolved. The repercussions of the Gulf war still prevail. The adverse effects of that situation on the people of Iraq, on Turkey and on the region as a whole are increasing. The only way out for Iraq is to cooperate fully with the United Nations by implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions. Turkey has been encouraging Iraq in that direction. We would like to see an Iraq whose territorial integrity and political unity are preserved and which is peacefully reintegrated into the international community.

The Caucasus is another area of close interest for Turkey. We aim to help in establishing comprehensive cooperation in the region. However, the unresolved conflicts in Nagorny-Karabakh and Abkhazia still stand as principal obstacles to political stability and economic development. The Security Council has adopted four resolutions urging the immediate withdrawal of all troops from the Azerbaijani territories, with which Armenia has not complied.

Being an active member of the Minsk Group, Turkey is working for a peaceful resolution of the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the OSCE. We initiated a tripartite meeting among the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey in May.

The Abkhazian conflict still endangers peace and stability in Georgia and in the entire region. From the outset, Turkey has supported the peaceful resolution of the conflict within the framework of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia.

In addition to the challenges of building national structures and of achieving economic growth, the young States of Central Asia have faced a set of new threats: radical religious movements, terrorist activities, drugs and weapons trafficking. After the tragedy of 11 September, the international community finally acknowledged the importance of stability in the region and of the need to support reform efforts. Transition to full democracy in Central Asia should be seen as a process to be completed gradually as nation-building, political stability and economic conditions are enhanced.

The United Nations is the vehicle for the realization of global expectations. We know that its future rests to a great extent on its responsiveness to the crisis of development in societies which have fallen behind.

As things stand, the process of globalization, the dominant force of our time, has amply shown its inherent weaknesses, which are apt to create profound issues of imbalance and inequality. A case can be made in favour of globalization's ability to raise the level of prosperity, to reduce poverty and to enhance liberties. However, the fears of the masses cannot be completely allayed without evidence of more responsive management of that process. Conflict, poverty, discrimination and injustice still blight the lives of millions in every part of the globe. More than 80 countries now have per capita incomes lower than those of a decade or more ago. Poverty is an offence to the conscience of the modern world.

In view of all those considerations, Africa has a special and urgent claim to global engagement and concern. My country supports efforts aimed at alleviating problems that afflict that continent. At this gathering, I wish to salute the birth of the African Union. We hope that Africans will thus be able to work more effectively to attain their goals.

In the same vein, Turkey has attributed great importance to the achievement of the goals and principles adopted initially at the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development and compiled under Agenda 21. They have been our guidelines in combating poverty and in protecting the global environment throughout the last decade, which has brought us to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, recently held in Johannesburg.

Before I conclude, I wish to underline one very important aspect of our foreign policy. Fifty years after the cornerstone was laid, the integration of Europe is gaining further momentum. The dynamic of European Union enlargement is opening up new horizons. The recognition of Turkey as a candidate for accession to the European Union has ushered in a new era in relations between Turkey and the European Union. Turkey is determined to be part of the historic process of unifying Europe.

The past decade has presented us with many threats to security. Each has created its own challenge. But one fundamental lesson can be drawn from them

all: no single State or organization is able to meet those modern challenges on its own. We need to work together closely. The United Nations is the very forum in which we can achieve international cooperation and harmonization to meet those challenges. As always, Turkey stands ready to do its utmost to contribute to the realization of its noble goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Brian Cowen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Cowen (Ireland): I congratulate the Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I look forward to working closely with him as the Czech Republic, a good friend of my country, moves ever closer to membership in the European Union. Our thanks are due to Mr. Han Seung-soo for his work as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I am delighted to welcome Switzerland as a new Member of the Organization and look forward to the imminent membership of East Timor, a nation whose birth was fostered by this Organization.

Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark has already addressed the General Assembly on behalf of the European Union. Ireland associates itself fully with his remarks.

We are all still haunted, a year later, by the shadow of the terrible deaths and events of 11 September 2001. Last year in the delayed general debate, I spoke about the implications of those atrocities. I set out my thoughts on how we as the international community should respond. My conclusions last year and my message today are the same.

The United Nations is at the centre of our system of collective security. It is a mirror of our determination and our political will. This is the world body invested by the peoples of the world with unique legitimacy and unique authority. Around the world people look in hope and idealism to the United Nations. We must be worthy of that trust.

I want to fully endorse the Secretary-General's address to the Assembly yesterday. As the Secretary-General said, "All States have a clear interest, as well as a clear responsibility, to uphold international law and maintain international order" (*see A/57/PV.2*). States must honour their international obligations. Unless we consistently call to account those who defy or flagrantly violate their obligations, our system will be discredited.

The choice we face is stark. Either we stand by and strengthen the international system and the rule of law, or we invite anarchy. The great Irish poet W. B. Yeats put it graphically in "The Second Coming":

> "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world".

That was what the perpetrators of 11 September wanted. Their vicious attack was not just on the innocent people — of many nationalities, including my own — in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania; not just on the United States; but on the very values we cherish and that are the foundation on which this Organization is built. They will have succeeded if we are provoked into abandoning those values and laws. Ultimately they can be defeated, and the scourge of international terror ended, only if we stand united in defence of our international obligations and the rule of law.

Within our system, the Security Council is charged with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. When there are threats to international peace and security, the Member States concerned are obliged to bring these matters to the attention of the Security Council. When the Security Council acts in such cases, all Member States are obliged to implement its resolutions. Regrettably, they sometimes fail to do so.

Any law that is flagrantly violated becomes weakened over time. That is why flagrant violation and defiance of Security Council resolutions should be a matter of the utmost concern to all Member States.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September required an urgent response from the international community. It was vital that the Security Council was at the centre of the international community's response. The Council, to quote the Secretary-General, responded "with patience, creativity and determination".

The Security Council adopted resolution 1368 (2001), demanding the fullest possible cooperation of the international community in bringing the perpetrators to justice. It subsequently authorized the deployment of an international security force to Afghanistan. It put in place measures to counter international terrorism.

The establishment by the Security Council of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to oversee the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) was a landmark development. Its work has been instrumental in making it more difficult for international terrorist networks to organize and finance their activities.

Continued persistence and vigilance are required. We still have much more to do. We must make it impossible for the agents of international terror to operate. We must persevere with initiatives such as the freezing of assets and the denial of safe haven. At the same time, we must ensure that everything we do respects the United Nations Charter and the body of international human rights law we have so painstakingly constructed. That is our best guarantee against evil and its perpetrators.

In his address to the General Assembly yesterday, the Secretary-General also correctly identified four serious current threats to world peace.

First, on the Middle East, there can be no doubt that there is a need for greater urgency in the efforts to bring an end to the conflict. The vision of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) must be implemented.

For far too long the Palestinian people have been denied their legitimate rights. Today they exist in a state of deep impoverishment. Ireland strongly believes that in order to reach a settlement that will give the Israeli people the security they deserve and that will give the Palestinian people their legitimate rights and sovereignty, the parties must move forward. They must in particular address not just the security issues but also the economic and humanitarian needs of Palestinians, and they must establish a concrete target for a political settlement.

For its part, the European Union, working closely with the United Nations, the United States and Russia through the "quartet", will continue to encourage and assist the parties to end the conflict and move towards a permanent peace.

This conflict has been an ongoing source of suffering for the peoples of the region and also a focal point of instability for the rest of the world. It remains a threat of the utmost gravity to international peace and security. We can and must give it the highest priority.

Secondly, the Secretary-General mentioned Iraq. Iraq has been in violation of Security Council resolutions, in particular on arms inspection, for some considerable time. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been engaged in serious efforts to encourage Iraq to comply with its obligations under those Security Council resolutions. We will continue to strongly support his good offices.

Let us express wholehearted agreement with the call by the Secretary-General for Iraq to comply with its obligations for the sake of its own people and for the sake of world order. If Iraq's defiance continues, the Security Council must face its responsibilities.

We call on Iraq to respect its obligations and to implement in full and without preconditions all the Security Council resolutions addressed to it. The weapons inspectors must be allowed in to do the work authorized by the Council. Iraq's leadership has it within its own power to end the current predicament and to alleviate the great hardship on its people. It should do so without delay.

Thirdly, it is essential for the international community to maintain its strong and active support for the people and the Government of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has come through great trials over the past year. We should not overlook the fact that, despite the best efforts of the international coalition to ensure that the use of force was targeted and proportionate, many innocent Afghans have died. We should remember them, too, in our thoughts and prayers. Ultimately, they are just as much victims of the terrorist groups who carried out the attacks of 11 September as those who were murdered in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

Considerable progress has been achieved in Afghanistan with the help of the international community. There are clear signs that, overall, the quality of life is improving. Nonetheless, there is still a long way to go if Afghanistan is completely to escape the violence and instability of the past.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains acute. The sustained and wholehearted support of the international community remains essential, therefore, if progress is to be maintained.

For its part, Ireland has been active in the Security Council, particularly in highlighting the humanitarian situation. We have pledged $12 million over the next three years, the majority of which has

already been dispensed. We are also contributing personnel to the international stabilization force.

Fourthly, as regards India and Pakistan, we welcome the decrease in tension between these two countries. The risk of open conflict between two nuclear-capable countries is a matter of the utmost concern to all of us. We encourage the leaders of India and Pakistan to address the underlying causes that give rise to the potential for conflict.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological and nuclear — is, of course, an issue that goes far beyond Iraq. They represent a major threat to international peace and security. The international instruments and regimes to control the spread, and bring about the elimination, of such weapons must be strengthened and fully implemented. Ultimately, the long-term control and elimination of weapons of mass destruction can be achieved only through a comprehensive and rigorous system of international treaties and obligations that are verifiable and universal.

Ireland, together with our New Agenda partners, will continue its efforts in this regard during this year's session of the General Assembly. We call on all States that are concerned about these issues to become more constructively engaged in the period ahead.

All of us recognize that conflict prevention, not just conflict resolution, is the central challenge facing the United Nations. Poverty, inequality and injustice are all too often the breeding ground for instability and for threats to peace. They are an affront to the international conscience. We must tackle the injustices that all too often allow conflict situations to develop.

Our challenge is to show that there is a peaceful and legitimate way of dealing with these problems. It is only through the development of integrated strategies that address the underlying causes of conflict — poverty, injustice and the abuse of fundamental rights and freedoms — that the international community can bring about long-term peace and stability.

The Millennium Summit Declaration confirmed the commitment of the world's leadership to tackling the root causes of conflict. The Secretary-General has since called for the United Nations to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Ireland fully supports the implementation of the Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention (A/55/985).

The United Nations must be equipped with the necessary tools to develop coherent conflict-prevention policies. Let us commit ourselves to supporting the Secretary-General in his ongoing reform initiatives. We must revitalize the General Assembly so that it can play its proper role. Let us re-engage on reform of the Security Council so that it reflects modern geopolitical realities. We need a Security Council which is as representative as possible of the international community, while being in a position to function efficiently, and we must provide the United Nations with sufficient resources to meet its responsibilities.

Sustainable development focused on poverty eradication is the most powerful instrument which the international community has to address the long-term root causes of conflict and to promote peace. Let us also remind ourselves of the international community's long-standing commitment to meeting the United Nations target of spending 0.7 per cent of gross national product on overseas development assistance. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, my Prime Minister, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, confirmed Ireland's commitment to meet that target by 2007.

Let us restate our commitment to providing universal access to basic health care. We must be relentless in the campaign to eliminate diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The spread of those diseases threatens to undermine our development programmes. We must step up our efforts to eradicate them. We must aim for the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, adopted by the General Assembly in June 2001. We must ensure that the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is adequately resourced.

The Johannesburg Summit agreed upon a global comprehensive action plan for sustainable development which will help guide our policies and programmes in the coming years. The Summit Declaration's commitment on sustainable development has the potential to make an important contribution to conflict prevention, particularly in Africa.

Effective conflict prevention is also about putting necessary structures in place. The Brahimi report on United Nations peace operations (A/55/305) acknowledged the pressing need to establish both long-term and short-term conflict prevention strategies. I would like to reiterate Ireland's support for the

Secretary-General's initiatives and for the role that United Nations peacekeeping has to play in an integrated conflict prevention strategy.

Peacekeeping is at the heart of Ireland's contribution to the United Nations. We are immensely proud of the contribution which Irish personnel have made to United Nations peacekeeping. We reserve a special place in our hearts for those who have given their lives in the service of the United Nations. This was demonstrated once again in a moving ceremony which was held to mark the standing down of the Irish battalion from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon after 24 years of service.

As a member of the European Union, Ireland welcomes the deepening cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations on conflict prevention and peacekeeping. This will be given further concrete expression when the European Union takes over the United Nations police operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina next January.

Respect for human rights is a core dimension in conflict prevention. This is the very foundation on which peace and security surely depend. Human rights must be integrated into all United Nations activities. The entry into force of the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court sends a clear signal of determination to bring to justice those who perpetrate genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. I would urge those who have not ratified the Rome Statute to do so. The international community is at its strongest when it stands unified, bound together by the strength of the rule of law.

I would like to take the opportunity presented by this address to the General Assembly to pay tribute to Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, who has just completed her term as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are deeply proud of her achievements. We know that she will continue to be a fearless champion of the universality of human rights.

Turning to the situation in Northern Ireland, we have seen substantial progress across the key areas of implementation of the Good Friday Agreement since I last addressed this Assembly. The political institutions of the Agreement are operating on a positive and inclusive basis, bringing tangible benefits across the board. An independent international commission has overseen two acts of arms decommissioning by the Irish Republican Army. The Patten Commission report's vision of a new beginning for policing in Northern Ireland is being progressively realized. I call on all to fully play their part in laying a foundation for and strengthening the new policing arrangements. Welcome progress has been made in normalizing security arrangements on the ground. However, more needs to be done, and we need to see further early progress, especially in the South Armagh area.

The considerable record of achievement, however, has not made us complacent about the difficulties and challenges that remain. The level of street violence in the interface areas of Belfast and the sectarian attacks on vulnerable households, for instance, have given us all cause for serious concern. These have had a corrosive effect on community confidence. They need to be addressed urgently in all their dimensions, including through effective policing measures leading to convictions.

The Irish and British Governments remain absolutely committed to the Good Friday Agreement and to its implementation in full. Its core principles — constitutional stability based on consent, partnership politics, inclusive political institutions and structured North-South cooperation on the island of Ireland — represent the only viable basis for a workable political accommodation. In short, the Agreement, which has been much praised and admired by States Members of the Assembly, continues to be the only template for political progress in Northern Ireland.

Before concluding, I would like to refer briefly to Ireland's membership of the Security Council, which comes to an end on 31 December 2002. Ireland's experience as a member of the Council has strongly reinforced our belief in the system of collective global security. The central role of the Security Council in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 underlined the importance of its role as guardian of international peace and security. It must now build on that achievement. Ireland has, I believe, made a substantive contribution to the work of the Council. We will seek to continue to do so in the remaining months of our term. Our mission in the United Nations is to continually strive for a world that is fair and just. This can best be done through our system of collective security, through international economic and social development and through respect for human rights and international law. If we can commit ourselves to respect the decisions of the Security Council and all

our other international obligations, then innocent lives can be saved and seemingly interminable conflicts resolved.

We have the methods and the means to peaceably resolve the dangers that threaten us. It should not be beyond our talent and resources to achieve this. But to do so, we need to assert the core values of multilateralism in particular, and its capacity to achieve, for all our people, a better and safer world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Maria Soledad Alvear Valenzuela, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile.

Ms. Alvear (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my country, I congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan and the other members of the Bureau on their election. The President can count on the full cooperation of the delegation of Chile for the success of his stewardship.

The Government of Chile takes this opportunity to welcome the accession to membership of the United Nations of the Swiss Confederation and, soon, of Timor-Leste. The presence of Switzerland strengthens its historical association with the founding principles of this Organization. The upcoming presence of Timor-Leste symbolizes the role of the United Nations in the creation of a viable and democratic State. We are proud to have contributed to that mission.

One year ago, this city suffered a reprehensible terrorist attack that left an indelible stain on the conscience of mankind. That date, 11 September 2001, marked a turning point in contemporary history. This episode brought us face to face with new dimensions of our human vulnerability, with a fragility that universalized insecurity. The attack perpetrated a few kilometres from this place showed us, with frightful cruelty, that human coexistence urgently requires new approaches and new instruments.

It has become necessary for Governments and societies to forge positive responses and to work together to resolutely confront terrorism. In a globalized world, it is imperative that we re-evaluate multilateralism, and Chile would like to renew its commitment in that regard.

We believe that, at this period of history, we have to make every effort to bring about a safer world. That challenge should unite societies and cultures. As the Secretary-General pointed out yesterday, the United Nations alone has the legitimacy necessary to contribute to an effective system of security. Complying with Security Council resolutions is a responsibility incumbent upon everyone, and is essential to the future of the Organization.

The changes that have taken place in recent years have created new challenges and responsibilities for the world that we must assume, and to which we must respond, as a global society. The risks today are indeed both global and without boundaries. Both States and ordinary men and women in every part of the world now face a new environment of uncertainty. In that context, traditional notions of security — which were formulated against the backdrop of threats from State actors — have been overtaken. A safer world requires that we build consensus and that we develop new approaches that both take into account the multi-dimensional nature of threats and place people at the centre of their concerns.

In such a security scenario it is urgent that we promote a comprehensive focus at the global level to deal with new threats and to build a world free of fear and poverty. The concept of human security has emerged from just that sort of change. We would like people to be at the centre of every multilateral deliberation. That was the priority that Chile put forth a decade ago with its initiative to hold a summit on social development. It is that same concern that has led to our participation in the Human Security Network, of which Chile has been the coordinator this year.

Human security is linked to the maintenance of international peace and security, public order and the social environment. Those elements should be promoted through innovative and effective strategies.

Chile's candidacy for a seat on the Security Council for the period 2003-2004 — which has the support of the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean States, for which we once again express our appreciation — seeks to strengthen the multilateral approach to crises that threaten international peace and security, as well as to place human security at the centre of the concerns of that main body of the United Nations.

Respect for human rights is a fundamental requirement in the search for a world that is free from fear, more secure and full of hope. Human rights are a source of political and social legitimacy in the contemporary international system and provide guidelines for its actions. As a member of the

Commission on Human Rights, our country will participate in initiatives to strengthen the fundamental and unique role of that body. Similarly, democracy too is a universal value, one which is expressed mainly through free elections and change in governance. Strengthening democracy requires integrity, transparency and good governance. That is the proper way to create a democratic environment in which a society can be better integrated, protected and imbued with meaning.

My country constructively supports and promotes the spread of the values of democracy and democratic thinking throughout the world. In our region, democracy is a fundamental value. The adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter represents a step forward in the continuing effort to further refine and strengthen democracy. In that vein, we welcome the establishment of the Community of Democracies as a concerted attempt to make universal the values inherent in democracy.

The cultural dimension, as an expression of a modern vision, must be part of our efforts to build a safer world. Intercultural dialogue and respect for diversity are fundamental elements of civilized relations between nations. We believe that intercultural dialogue should contribute to strengthening the universal values of human dignity.

International terrorism is a negation of the values that make possible civilized coexistence, in which there must be room for the diversity of the world. Terrorism is the greatest risk facing the global community in building a safer world. Political commitment is therefore needed to agree on effective efforts to eradicate terrorism within the framework of international law. Intercultural dialogue is essential to develop a global strategy to combat terrorism. The United Nations plays an essential role as the leading organization in the fight against terrorism. The work of the Security Council and of its Counter-Terrorism Committee, established pursuant to Council resolution 1373 (2001), and the development of a general convention on international terrorism are efforts that we support and to which we will continue to contribute. A convention on terrorism has been adopted at the regional level, and we will continue to intensify our cooperation through the Inter-American Committee on Terrorism and the Common Market of the South.

The risks and threats to global security, which are beyond the effective control of States, highlight the nature of globalization in our world today. Indeed, the characteristics of globalization can be seen in such phenomena as the globalization of markets, the intensification of social relations and the broadening of cultural exchanges and communications. At the same time, however, risks have also become global and the imbalances resulting from the unequal distribution of wealth have increased, thereby accentuating the trend towards the marginalization and exclusion of communities, countries and regions.

We believe in the benefits of economic and political globalization. But we also believe that globalization requires good governance and a systematic and shared effort by the international community to establish the rules of the new international system. We believe that there should be greater participation in this effort, as well as ongoing consultations with our citizens and our civil societies. The United Nation system is an indispensable forum for addressing these challenges.

Just as we believe that the process of globalization in which we are now engaged requires clear rules in order for its benefits to reach all of mankind, we also believe that the economic growth and prosperity of countries require freedom, democracy and security in this global world. Chile had adopted a model that assigns to the market and to the private sector a key role in its development plans, within a framework of democracy and solidarity. We are convinced that active participation in international trade is a positive way of achieving growth, increasing employment, being innovative in the area of technology and being effective in the allocation of resources.

Based on our commitment to development with equity, we have opened up our economy, our communications and our culture; and we are satisfied at having done so. We believe, based on our experience, that globalization can be a source of opportunity for all nations, particularly for small and remote countries such as ours, which are far from the major consumer centres and international flows.

In order for the efforts of nations such as ours to be rewarded, however, it is essential for international trade to be fair, to have clear-cut, established rules, and to avoid measures that distort it. Subsidies and lax

implementation of anti-dumping measures are obstacles to the achievement of that goal. In this connection, I wish to place special emphasis on the urgent need for the liberalization of the trade in agricultural products. Many developing countries, including my own, are highly competitive in this sector, but the benefits are lost because of protectionism in the developed countries.

We argued forcefully in Doha and Monterrey that in order for there to be growth, there must be access to markets. As President Ricardo Lagos stated in Monterrey, "If trade barriers were eliminated, the developing countries would have the potential to earn $130 billion, more than twice the $50 billion that we proposed as a target for the Millennium Summit".

We urge the United Nations to continue its efforts to promote the integrated activities of the various multilateral political, economic and financial agencies that are helping to achieve a world of greater development, equity and security.

As the multilateral system continues to develop culturally, socially and politically, Chile will continue to promote the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the various activities of the international system and its subsystems. We also support the creation of opportunities for participation by civil society organizations.

The more developed, more equitable and safer world to which we aspire also requires us to establish international standards for the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups. Chile will continue to encourage the conclusion of agreements that contribute to the formulation and improvement of public policies in this field. I would like to underscore our political commitment to achieving a comprehensive convention that protects and promotes the rights and dignity of people with disabilities. Integration, recognition of the dignity of people and equality of opportunity for all are the basic precepts of a more secure society.

We are convinced that we need to commit ourselves as an international community to more active policies for the protection of the environment. Few issues on the international agenda affect us all equally as much as this one and, paradoxically, few generate as many disputes. The Johannesburg Summit confirmed my belief that we must work towards consensus on basic concepts.

The right to live in a socially acceptable environment is an ethical imperative of the present day. We must therefore give priority to a global environmental agenda that focuses on improving legal norms relating to, and providing better protection for, the oceans, the climate, the atmosphere and the ozone layer.

Given the direct impact that this issue has on development, I wish to note that, in December 2003, at Concepción, Chile, the World Biotechnology Forum will take place under the sponsorship of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Government of Chile.

With regard to the political dimension, which emphasizes security, human rights, democracy and the fight against terrorism, I would like to refer to certain areas of the world that are of greatest concern to the international community. Latin America is a region in which democracy is the norm, even though in some cases it is fragile. The nations of our continent have learned how difficult it is to build and sustain democratic institutions based on universal principles and values. We have a number of regional and subregional mechanisms that compel us to fulfil this obligation. The Rio Group is without doubt the most important of these.

The world is aware of the current economic crisis in our region. This is a paradoxical situation. Latin America responded properly to the challenge and adopted many of the structural economic reforms that were asked of it, which led to a degree of liberalization without precedent in its history. The developed world, however, is sending contradictory signals that test the faith of those of us who view globalization and the system of free trade as the basis for the development of our peoples. Those of us who believe that globalization must be based on the principles of competitiveness without exclusion thus see, on a regular basis, restrictions placed on our products; these are very difficult to explain. This casts doubt on the existence of a desire to move towards a globalization without compartmentalization.

Because of its gravity, I must refer to a conflict that affects the entire international community. Chile wishes to express its deep concern at the grave situation in the Middle East in the light of the impasse in the peace negotiations aimed at finding a solution to the crisis between Palestinians and Israelis. The

continuing escalation of the violence that began in the region on 28 September 2000 continues to claim many victims and to cause heavy material damage, and threatens to spread throughout the region, thereby posing a serious danger to international peace and security.

The Government of Chile reiterates the need for the strict implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and recourse to constructive negotiation, with a view to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace that make possible the creation of a viable Palestinian State and coexistence with the State of Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders. A world in which Palestinians and Israelis can live together will be a more secure world.

We share the international sense of urgency that the Government of Iraq must abide by the provisions of Security Council resolutions in the interest of regional and global security. We are convinced that in this globalized world it is essential for us to act in accordance with the principles and values promoted by the United Nations.

In Africa we now see signs of hope. Chile wishes to express its firm support for the African continent in its decision to create modern regional instruments, such as the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. We hope that these initiatives, to which Africans themselves have referred to as the African renaissance, will generate in the international community a response commensurate with those efforts. This is a new challenge for the twenty-first century, and the United Nations must be involved.

Chile, a small nation that looks out at the world from the South, has developed important links of international solidarity in the most diverse directions — in Latin America as part of the inter-American system; in its association with the European Union; and as a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization. In opting for open multilateralism, we are facing today's challenge of working towards a more secure world — a world free from fear and poverty. We will encounter obstacles which we must confront with shared political resolve. This is the responsibility of all the countries represented here today in the General Assembly.

Let us advance towards global human security. Let us combat terrorism, poverty and misery in the search for a more democratic and more tolerant society. In this challenge, Chile is convinced that multilateralism can and must contribute to overcoming the insecurity currently prevailing in the world. The United Nations offers such an opportunity to the international community. It is a forum that can and must seek consensual solutions to the inescapable problems now plaguing humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Pérez-Cadalso Arias, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras.

Mr. Pérez-Cadalso Arias (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): The recognized leadership of Mr. Jan Kavan will guarantee the success of our debates. Together with congratulating him on his election to the presidency, I should like to assure him that he can count on my Government's full cooperation in his work.

I come to this universal forum on behalf of a people which last November renewed its commitment to democracy. Representing the constitutional Government headed by Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, who has made the welfare of his people the essence of his mandate, I come with a message of peace and friendship from Honduras addressed to all the nations gathered here.

My country's Government, born of the will of the people through a free and transparent election regarded as a model, has in a few months brought about changes that have strengthened Honduran democracy. It has implemented historic institutional reforms, such as the depoliticization of the Supreme Court of Justice, the disallowing of participation in the presidential election from positions of political advantage, the creation of a higher accounting tribunal to exercise overall monetary control, and the depoliticization of the national electoral tribunal. Moreover, it has developed civil security schemes and measures that are effective and respectful of human rights, all within a context of transparency in administrative management and a head-on campaign against corruption and extreme poverty.

As a Government, we are doing what we responsibly must do, and in that work we wish to continue to rely on the friendly and respectful assistance of the international community, to which we likewise offer our solidarity and cooperation. Moreover, I come to the Assembly with the firm

resolve to associate my country with the efforts of all Member States to realize fully the purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter. I come to the Organization also to offer my Government's cooperation in the building of peace, in the maintenance of international security and in the forging of a global alliance for human development.

The day 11 September 2001 is an indelible date in the history of humanity. The unprecedented terrorist attacks changed for ever the face of New York, the "iron Babel", which, despite its great sorrow and grief, continues to offer us its hospitality. Thousands of families belonging to many peoples of the United Nations, including mine, were plunged into grief and pain on that fateful day. Our condolences and solidarity are with them.

As it did on that tragic occasion, the Government of Honduras condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to reaffirm in this world forum our unswerving commitment to use all our skill and energy to combat this scourge that threatens civilized coexistence among nations. With the same conviction, Honduras reaffirms its resolve to cooperate with other democratic nations in the common undertaking to eradicate this evil, thus building a better and less violent world.

Since 11 September 2001, many things have changed. However, other threats persist and continue to loom over our peoples, making increasingly imperative the quest for new consensus and greater commitments. Following the Millennium Summit, three conferences at the highest level and of the most far-reaching importance have been held in recent months. Our heads of State or Government met first in Monterrey to consider the issues of financing for development, later in Rome to address the problem of world hunger and, most recently, in Johannesburg to debate the great challenges of sustainable development. From each of those conferences, we have emerged moderately satisfied in terms of concrete results. However, we recognize that the dialogue must continue so that we can together seek new forms of cooperation to alleviate the hunger and pain of a large part of humanity, whose very survival is in danger as a result of the vortex of economic development taking place at the cost of the planet's destruction.

All of those commitments demand a United Nations revitalized in its action and strengthened in its internal structure. The time has come to reconsider creatively and with greater determination the organizational structure of the Security Council, an organ that cannot continue to turn its back on a reality is very different from that of 1945. Honduras will not rest in its insistence on the need to abolish or restrict the right of veto enjoyed by some Members of the Organization. Likewise, my country believes that the States contributing to development should have a seat and participate in the debate and work of that important United Nations organ.

The time has come to join in our resolve to seek mechanisms and decisions that will secure the full participation of all the peoples and nations of the Earth. It is time for those who have been Members of the Organization to return. For that reason, Honduras believes that we should not continue the practice of excluding from our debates and our work concrete realities such as Taiwan, a country whose participation could offer new opportunities for cooperation for the benefit of many peoples, and which, in turn could benefit from our activity and decisions.

In essence, Honduras pleads for a new United Nations in which all peoples and nations enjoy full representation and in which there is more just and balanced representativity in the discussions and in the resultant resolutions. In this context, Honduras welcomes the accession of Switzerland and the incorporation of Timor-Leste into our world Organization. I take this opportunity to wish them the warmest of welcomes.

In the broad and comprehensive vision of what, in my Government's opinion, this Organization should be, special mention must be made of the International Court of Justice, since it is the jurisdictional organ of the United Nations system and all States Members have committed themselves to complying with its decisions in the cases to which they are party.

Just as Honduras endorses the principles and practices of international law that promote human solidarity, respect for the self-determination of peoples, non-interference and the safeguarding of universal peace and democracy, we also proclaim the validity and compulsory application of international arbitration and judicial rulings to be irrevocable. Consistent with this state philosophy, my country is absolutely convinced that compliance with international rulings handed down by a competent international court, as

well as good-faith compliance with the commitments undertaken by means of treaty, will guarantee peace, harmony and security among peoples and Governments.

Honduras feels that the very credibility of a country is at stake when it complies or fails to comply with the obligations arising from an international ruling. As for Honduras, the resolution of a competent international court has constitutional weight and its effects require immediate execution, for we believe that law and legality are unshirkable imperatives of the new international order. Moreover, in my Government's opinion, they are the cornerstone of international society in this century.

Prompted by this conviction, in January my country turned to the Security Council, in its capacity as guarantor of the implementation of the rulings of the International Court of Justice, in seeking the requisite cooperation to ensure compliance with the ruling that the Court handed down 10 years ago in the dispute which, by common agreement with the Republic of El Salvador, we submitted to it for consideration and decision. Recent events in our countries have led us to believe that the implementation of the ruling will begin very soon as a result of talks between the Presidents of the two nations. We sincerely hope that this may be the case, both because we do not wish to distract the Security Council's attention from this matter, which is of importance to our peoples and to the validity of international public law itself, and because we wish to promote the process of integration to which the whole of Central America is now committed.

The Central American isthmus is going through a special moment in its history. There is a resolve among our Governments to grasp the future together and, accordingly, we have agreed to promote the creation of a customs union among the partners of the regional integration system, which should be established by December 2003. This renewed integration, as we call it, offers opportunities both for our collectivity and for our neighbours and partners in development, as in the case of Mexico with the Puebla-Panamá plan. Important challenges are also being met in concert, such as the negotiation of a free-trade treaty with the United States of America. We intend later to repeat the experience with the European Union.

Despite the significant progress that has been made, and as in other regional systems of States, practices persist that impede the full development of our trade relations. Fortunately, we are striving to overcome these obstacles through dialogue and solutions appropriate to civilized nations which understand that, given our common past, we share a common future.

At the present time, there are grounds for grave concern in the face of events and realities that threaten international peace and security. The situation in the Middle East has been a constant cause of concern to all. Honduras appeals to the men and women of that region to repudiate and renounce violence and thus give peace a chance for the sake of a generation of children who see and experience nothing but violence as they grow. This and other bloody conflicts require us to rethink and reformulate new ideas for prompt action.

We need to globalize solidarity and human development. The great challenges of this century require us to increase the worldwide presence of the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and other entities and agencies of our system, whose work effectively contributes to establishing the conditions to ensure that all boys, girls, men and women of all ages, regardless of their ethnic origin, colour or religious creed, may live in an environment conducive to the full exercise of their rights.

In this context, the peoples of the world are calling for concerted action on the part of our Governments to make the United Nations the world's most efficient Organization for addressing the challenges posed by the millions of men, women and children infected by the HIV virus; by others, suffering unemployment, who have entered the most destitute sectors of society; and by the more than 40 million boys and girls who wander or simply live on the streets.

Over time, crimes against humanity have motivated concerted action on the part of all peoples to develop new and advanced schemes for international protection. That is the case with the new International Criminal Court, to which Honduras is honoured to be party. We applaud this revolutionary effort in the administration of criminal justice and hope that, sooner

rather than later, a[t] he States Members of the United Nations will join it.

I wish to conclude my statement by emphasizing that the great challenges we face in today's world demand concerted and global action. If we truly wish to see the planet survive and, with it, the human race, the time has come to work together responsibly to forge real partnerships for human development and sustainable development for all the peoples of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. A representative has asked to speak in right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): The delegation of Pakistan has asked for the floor to respond to the rhetoric against my country that was delivered this morning by the Prime Minister of India. We had hoped for a response from him to the call for de-escalation and dialogue that was offered by the President of Pakistan in his address yesterday. Instead, we heard the usual diatribe against my country.

The Prime Minister spoke about nuclear blackmail. Let me remind him that it was India that moved its troops to the frontiers of Pakistan. It was Mr. Vajpayee himself who in May threatened a decisive battle against Pakistan. It was India that introduced nuclear weapons to South Asia. It was India that initiated the nuclear explosions in 1998. It was India that declared itself a nuclear-weapon State after those explosions. It was India that announced a nuclear doctrine that involves the deployment of a triad of nuclear weapons on land, sea and air. It was the Indian army chief who, on 11 January, said that Pakistan could be threatened with a strike which could make "its continuation in any form doubtful". That is nuclear blackmail.

Pakistan has proposed a nuclear-weapon-free zone for 20 years. We proposed nuclear restraint after the explosions. President Musharraf has said that the use of nuclear weapons should be unthinkable and that our conventional defence is sufficient to deter India. We have even proposed the denuclearization of South Asia. Let India respond positively to our proposals.

If India sincerely wants to avoid war, all Prime Minister Vajpayee had to do was to accept our President's offer to withdraw the troops to peacetime locations, to accept the reinstallation of the ceasefire and the Line of Control which we had observed in 2000 and to resume the dialogue which was started and almost formalized in a declaration at Agra and which was agreed between my President and Prime Minister Vajpayee but was scuttled by certain hard-liners in the Indian Government.

A dialogue is necessary when two countries have differences. That dialogue must address the underlying causes of their differences and tensions. That is what the Secretary-General and so many other people of good will have called for. But the Indian Prime Minister even admonished them for suggesting that we should address the underlying causes of our differences.

In a rare admission, however, the Indian Prime Minister admitted that there was a call for a plebiscite in Kashmir to decide its future. That plebiscite was called for by the United Nations Security Council — yes, 50 years ago, but it was repeated several times. A Security Council resolution does not become time-barred. After all, resolution 242 (1967) also is 35 years old. It is certainly not time-barred. No Security Council resolution is time-barred until it is implemented. India has been the biggest violator for the longest time of the most number of Security Council resolutions adopted by this international Organization.

Self-determination is an inherent right given by the Charter. It cannot be extinguished until it is exercised. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have that right to self-determination. That right to self-determination will not be extinguished until India accepts the exercise by the people of Jammu and Kashmir through what the Security Council has called for: a United Nations-supervised plebiscite. India remains in violation of Security Council resolutions until it accepts that. We all heard yesterday that Security Council resolutions must be implemented. We endorse that statement.

The Prime Minister of India spoke about elections in Kashmir. The Security Council has declared that such elections in Kashmir cannot be a substitute for the

plebiscite. But no election can be free and fair when it is held under the jackboots of 700,000 thousand troops that India has deployed in Kashmir. No election can be fair when India refuses the suggestion — made, among others, by the Secretary of State of the United States — to accept international monitors to see that these elections are fair. No election can be fair when 25 of the 40 leaders of the Kashmiri All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), the conglomerate of 35 political parties of Kashmir, remain in Indian jails.

Nobody has to interfere with these so-called elections. These elections have been refused by the APAC. They have been refused by the Kashmiri people. In fact, these so-called elections were dead on arrival.

The Indian Prime Minister spoke about the large number of Muslims in India. He said that there were 150 million. We think he exaggerates. But certainly, the numbers will not go up if the Hindu majority, which Mr. Vajpayee leads in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), continues the practice of massacring Muslims every few weeks.

Since 1947, there have been 150,000 communal riots in India — 3,000 such riots every year. In February this year, 2,000 Kashmiris were killed mercilessly by mobs organized with the complicity of the State Chief Minister and his Government. More than 2,000 innocent men, women and children were massacred. Women were raped. Pregnant women were killed in cold blood. There has been no accountability for that act of genocide against the Muslims of Gujarat. There has been a cover-up by the Government in New Delhi. And there has been silence in this world and in this Hall.

Mr. Vajpayee spoke about communal harmony being the signature tune of Indian civilization. Well, we think that this signature tune is designed to lull the world while they continue the carnage of innocent Muslims.

India poses as the largest democracy in the world. We all know this corrupt democracy. It is, in our view, the largest hypocrisy of this world. In its short history, India has emerged as a State with a clear proclivity towards resorting to force or the threat of the use of force. It has undertaken the largest number of conflicts with its neighbours. It has a conflict or dispute with every one of its neighbours. It has 16 internal conflicts which are taking place. It is a country and a society riven by division and the multiple apartheid of the caste system. This is a country which comes here to preach and lecture on democracy and terrorism. We do not accept the credentials of this hypocrisy.

We ask the Assembly to call on India to stop the massacre of Muslims, to stop the massacre of Kashmiris and to implement the resolutions of the Security Council.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): A representative has requested to exercise the right of reply according to the same rules. I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mrs. Singh (India): It is regrettable that the representative of Pakistan has chosen to attack the person of the Prime Minister of India and has chosen this forum of the General Assembly to do so.

Given the tenor of the statement made by Pakistan in the General Assembly yesterday, perhaps we could not have expected anything better. Our positions on all issues have been clearly enunciated by the Prime Minister of India in his statement today. We do not wish to dignify the remarks made by the delegation of Pakistan with a reply.

The meeting rose at 7.20 p.m.